

Dear friends,

I hope you are all weathering the weather this summer! I suspect that we have all found it rather debilitating at times, but nevertheless we keep going. Today we think about Jesus calling us to him, telling us that his burden is light – telling us that he will give us rest. Life is very hectic at times and things can get too much for us – but Jesus offers us rest in him. Every blessing to each one of you. Margaret.

Call to worship: Jesus says, ‘Come to me all of you.

Come if you like noise, excitement and celebration.

Come if you like quiet and calm and a chance to catch your breath.

Come if you want to grow and learn and change.

Come if you are uncertain or doubtful about the way ahead.

Come to me all of you and try my light, refreshing and restful way.

Lord, we come to you now in your name – we bring ourselves before you.

When we are heavy of heart, and the pressures of life push us down we bring ourselves to you for your burden is light.

When we are in need of rest tired from the activities of the past week we bring ourselves to you for your burden is light.

Jesus, humble, gentle Lord, we leave behind that which holds us back, and devote ourselves to celebrating the wonder of your love. Amen.

The words to ‘I heard the voice of Jesus say’ by Horatius N Bonar [1808-1889]

StF 248

1 I heard the voice of Jesus say:

‘Come unto me and rest;

lay down, O weary one, lay down

your head upon my breast.’

I came to Jesus as I was,

weary and worn and sad.

I found in him a resting place,

and he has made me glad.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say:

‘Behold, I freely give

the living water; thirsty one,

stoop down and drink and live.’

I came to Jesus, and I drank

of that life-giving stream;

my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,

and now I live in him.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say:

‘I am this dark world’s Light;

look unto me, your morn shall rise,

and all your day be bright.’

I looked to Jesus and I found

in him my star, my sun;

and in that light of life I’ll walk, till travelling days are done.

Prayer including the Lord's Prayer

Father God, of all creation – our hearts sing you a love song.

Precious Son of God, Servant King – our hearts sing you a love song.

Refreshing Holy Spirit of divine wisdom – our hearts sing you a love song.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, your love is like a bottomless well from which we drink every day.

Our hearts adore you. Amen.

Almighty God, when we do not understand why we do the things we do – forgive us.

When we speak out of spite and not in love – forgive us.

When we act out of anger and not in mercy – forgive us.

When pride overcomes humility – forgive us.

When jealousy is more important than generosity – forgive us.

In Christ there is freedom – set us free.

Lord, by your Spirit, teach us when we do not understand why we have fallen short of your ideal.

Forgive us our sins and transform us by the perfect law of freedom, in your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father God is a God of love and wisdom. All our wrongdoings, all wrong decisions, have been forgiven through the gift of Jesus on the cross.

Through his blood, God's own Son has paid all our debts – past, present and future.

We are loved and forgiven – all thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus said: 'Come to me: mine is a light burden, an easy yoke, a sure and refreshing way.'

We thank you, Jesus, for setting the pace and showing us God's way. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 11: 16-19 and 25-30 taken from The Holy Bible – The New Testament [a New Translation] by William Barclay. Copyright William Barclay 1968

'With what can I compare the children of today? They are like children sitting in the market-place, calling to their companions and saying:

“When we played you a happy tune, you did not dance;

When we wailed you a sad lament, you did not mourn.”

For John came living the life of an ascetic, and they say: 'The man is demon-possessed!' The Son of Man came enjoying life like a normal person, and they say: 'A glutton and a drunkard! The friend of renegade tax-collectors and of people whom no respectable Jew would have anything to do!' But God's wisdom is vindicated by its results.'

It was then that Jesus said: 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and clever and that you have revealed them to those who are as simple as little children. Yes, indeed, Father, I thank you, for this is what you chose to do.'

All things have been entrusted to me by my Father. No one really knows the Son except the Father, and no one really knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to make him known.

Come to me, all you who are tired and bent beneath your burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on your shoulders, and let me teach you, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is kindly and my load is light.'

Comment: The passage begins with Jesus pointing out the irony in his opponents' stance. Their opposition is not really based on what he says and does, since they also opposed John's contrary behaviour. They have pre-judged the issue, then searched for arguments to support their judgement – behind their words lies a hidden agenda to do with preserving their own power and influence. Their attitude, however, demonstrates a lack of wisdom; hence Jesus' soliloquy where he thanks God that children have understood what the educated and intelligent have not.

Matthew, more than any other Gospel, identifies Jesus with Wisdom – uniting the male figure of Jesus with the female figure of Wisdom [see Proverbs 8]. True wisdom confounds apparent wisdom. Jesus' prayer might remind us of the child's role in the story of the emperor's new clothes. Simplicity often sees what sophistication obscures. The term infant might be a metaphor for the 'humble and meek' who make up Matthew's community, and who have recognised true wisdom in Jesus.

To know God as Father, to become part of God's new family, we need to know Jesus. Paradoxically, given the high demands of holy living laid out earlier in the Gospel [eg: 5:48], Jesus' yoke is easy and his burden light – coming to him is rest for our souls.

While Matthew's community did expect extraordinarily high standards of conduct, it probably did not impose burdens of circumcision or full observance of the Jewish law on non-Jews.

The concept of 'rest' is a powerful one. Matthew's community had known – indeed still knew – many trials and tribulations. Many are likely to have been refugees from the rebellion and life was doubtless a struggle, even without the conflicts within Judaism. The offer of inner security will have meant a lot.

Prayer

How do we do it, Lord?

How do we turn a message of deliverance into a religion that enslaves – a gospel of freedom into a travesty of faith which remorselessly holds us captive?

It shouldn't be possible, but we do it time and again, adding to the trials of life by weighing ourselves down with guilt, rules, demands and expectations – each of our own making rather than yours.

Remind us that your yoke is easy and your burden light – that you invite us to cast whatever loads we carry on to your shoulders, confident that you are strong enough to bear not just them but us too.

Help us, then, to truly let go, and to find rest in body, mind and soul. Amen.

Close: Loving Father, every morning that comes was created by you – every hour that passes we give to you – every meal that we share we receive from you – every person we meet is loved by you – every joy we experience is found in you – every tear that we shed is precious to you – every night that falls is watched over by you. Send us, your people, to your world, in need and in plenty. Send us in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

