



JESUS OF NAZARETH
COME TO JESUS
MATTHEW 11:28-29
8-23-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

Reflect:

Psalm 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. (ESV)

Welcome

Good Morning! Smoke! Another challenge to face as individuals, families and church. And, another burden to navigate. We were supposed to be gathering at our beautiful facility on 131 West F street but out of obedience and love, we are choosing to meet outdoors. So, we were supposed to be gathering at the beautiful Bloomingcamp Ranch this morning but out of concerns regarding the smoke and our health, we are choosing to meet at home this week. What are you feeling this morning? How are you handling all the changes and challenges that we have faced the past 6 months? I know it weighs on me in different ways at different times. As we gather apart again, may the words of our opening blessing and prayer mean even more to you this morning.

May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance!

Call to Worship: Psalm 11 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. OF DAVID.

In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, “Flee like a bird to your mountain, for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart; if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD’s throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man. The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.

Christ Candle – Light the candle as a reminder that God is Light (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)!

We live in a dark world. A significant portion of that darkness resides in the persecution of Christians around the world for their faith in Jesus of Nazareth. In America, in general, this persecution is minimal. We are free to be disciples of Jesus as individuals, as families and as congregations. We are not singled out and threatened with death, violence or imprisonment simply because we identify as a Christian. We have it easy. That is not true for millions of Christians around the world where there are extreme consequences to being a disciple of Jesus from your family, others and the government. In many countries, it is illegal to be a Christian and punishable by imprisonment or death. For the foreseeable future, we will look at some of these countries as ranked by Open Doors USA to keep us



aware of our brothers and sisters in Christ who need our prayers and help and to remind us to be grateful for how good we have it here.

The fourth most difficult place to be a Christian today is Libya. There are about 30 thousand disciples of Jesus of Nazareth in Libya out of a population of roughly 6.5 million. “The absence of a single central government to uphold law and order contributes to the extreme levels of pressure in national and church life. Libyan Christians with a Muslim background face violent and intense pressure to renounce their faith from their family and the wider community. There is no freedom of speech, no equal treatment of Christians, no recognition of the church and no churches being built.

Prayer Points: Pray for the protection of Christian converts from Islam and ask God to connect them with other believers so they will know they are not alone. Pray for protection of migrant workers in Libya, especially for those who are Christians and face double persecution. Pray for a stable government to be established in Libya and ask God to provide religious freedom for Christians.

Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine His light!

Song: Holy, Holy, Holy -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgHrNNM23p8>

*Holy, holy, holy!
Lord God Almighty
Early in the morning
Our song shall rise to Thee
Holy, holy, holy!
Merciful and mighty
God in three persons
Blessed Trinity!*

*Holy, holy, holy!
Though the darkness hide thee
Though the eye of sinful man
Thy glory may not see
Only Thou art holy
There is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love and purity*

*Holy, holy, holy!
Lord God Almighty
All thy works shall praise Thy name
In earth and sky and sea
Holy, holy, holy!
Merciful and mighty
God in three persons
Blessed Trinity*

Responsive Reading – Ezekiel 36:24–28

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.



And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Prayer

Pray slowly through the Lord's Prayer three times. Let the words sink deep into you. Open your heart and mind to the working of the Holy Spirit to shape you more into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.

Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Song: Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zundjUFazfg>

*What gift of grace is Jesus my Redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom
My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to His
Oh how strange and divine, I can sing: all is mine!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me
The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Savior He will stay
I labor on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed
To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me
No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave
To this I hold, my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released, I can sing: I am free!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me
With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me*



*Until I stand with joy before the throne
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!*

Offering

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Youth Celebration

We recognize and celebrate the presence and participation of our youth. Last week's message focused on the image of greatness – a child! We said that Jesus loves children and so should we. We said that the image of greatness in a child is their dependent humility on their parents and other adults to raise them – food, clothing, shelter, protection, advocacy, play, education and more. What was your week like? How did you practice childlike humility? We said the demonstration of greatness was forgiveness. Did you have the opportunity to forgive or be forgiven this week? Pray that you might more fully embrace humility and forgiveness as the image and demonstration of greatness.

Baptism: Jameson and Paisley Loyd, children of Colin and Lindsey Loyd - Postponed

We were supposed to be baptizing Jameson and Paisley this morning. While there is complete understanding given the situation, I and the parents (Colin and Lindsey) are disappointed that this is postponed. We will, Lord willing baptize them on September 20. This service was originally designed around baptism but God has other plans for us this morning.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 11:28-29

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Gospel Message: Come To Jesus

Sigh. Big slow breath in and out. It seems I am doing more of that lately. Maybe you too? For me it's a sign of burden and a small way to relax and refocus. It is a small, physical way to acknowledge the challenges and weight of navigating the world we live in now: pandemic and protests and elections and smoke and mask and social distancing and online teaching and online learning and postponements and delays and closures and missed events and closed businesses and self-quarantine and it goes on and on. More so for some than others. This is all added upon the daily pressures we already normally face



with marriage, parenting, school, work, health, finances, home and vehicle cleaning, care and maintenance, paying bills, getting prescriptions, buying food, clothes and dish washing, self-image, yard care, social media communications, relational dynamics with friends, co-workers, bosses, and family, temptations to sin (envy, pride, sloth, gluttony, lust, greed, anger), committed sins, forgiving, spiritual health, emotional health, sports practice and games, driving to and from, family events, work events, church events, and zoom after zoom meetings and more. Feeling overwhelmed all of a sudden. You're welcome!

What do we do when we are feeling burdened? Overwhelmed? Pushed to the edge? Tired? Fatigued? We turn to Jesus. Matthew quotes Jesus of Nazareth saying, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden (any of you right now?), and I will give you rest (any of you need this right now?). Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Wow! That is a promise at the end – you will find rest for your souls. It's not a maybe. It's not partially. It's not temporary. It's rest. In Christ. But there are three things we must do in order to "find" this rest. These three things are normative to being a daily disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. There is nothing extraordinary about them or unusual or something we do rarely as disciples of Jesus. What are the three things? (1) We must come to Jesus. (2) We must take up his yoke. (3) We must learn from him.

First, we need to come to Jesus. That is, we proactively and intentionally and deliberately and purposefully and consciously go to him. We seek him and his kingdom (Matthew 6:33). That means we first do not go to other things or other people (and if you do, they ought to image Christ to you verbally and visibly and point you back to Jesus). Who or what do you tend to go to when you are feeling burdened, overly tired and fatigued emotionally and spiritually? Is it a thing like a food or drink? Is it music or shopping or medicine or social media or curling up in a dark place? Is it a certain celebrity or personality, maybe watching TV or YouTube or binging on a series or movies? Jesus says to come to him. What does that look like? Well, where is Jesus? Yes, he is physically at the right hand of the Father but spiritually he is closer to you than yourself. He is in you and you are in him, united by the Holy Spirit. So going to Jesus is not a long trip! In fact, its instantaneous. He is present with you as his disciple – always. He never leaves you nor forsakes you (Matthew 28:20). That is a promise. And God does not break his promises. Never. Ever. **This means whenever, wherever and for whatever, you have his attention. Better yet, whenever, wherever and for whatever he can have our attention.** How aware are you of the presence of Jesus in your daily life – work, school, home, play? What might you do to be more aware of his presence in the future so that you might turn to him whenever you are feeling the burdens of life (we turn to him for more than that – we turn to him in all things, doing and sharing and engaging all of life in him, through him and with him)? Remember and live out this truth: Jesus does not leave us or forsake us but is always with us and for us no matter how bad it gets around us.

Second, we take up his yoke. Hmm. That's a strange image but one that is actually pretty familiar in this area. A yoke is used in farming and agriculture. It is a piece of equipment that is used primarily on a large animal like an ox or two so that they can pull weight - a cart or piece of farming equipment for



example to plow or do other work. It also is used to steer them. So when Jesus says to take his yoke upon us, he is saying that we are to be connected to him in such a way that he can use us for his work and to guide us where to do that work. In other words, it is an image of submission to Jesus of Nazareth as our Lord and King. It is a humble (We are beggars. It is true!) posture of the obedience of faith that characterizes disciples of Jesus. Of course, the experience for the



oxen tied to a yoke that is connected to a load of work under the authority of the farmer depends on the size of the load and the character of the farmer. If the load is too much the oxen will not be able to do it, tire out and give up. What load do we carry? With Jesus it is simply to image him in what we say and do from a heart that has been transformed, made alive, softened to his will and ways. It is to train ourselves in the good news of Jesus so that we might enact the good works of faith that honors him and brings us joy. It is grace and love and mercy and peace and forgiveness and joy. It is not the impossible burden of laboring to earn your salvation, to merit a reward of eternal life with God. It is not the impossible burden of procuring your forgiveness through being good. It is not the impossible burden of finding peace through your own intrinsic value, worth, quality or excellence apart from Jesus Christ. It is receiving grace, receiving gift, receiving mercy, receiving love, receiving forgiveness, receiving reconciliation, receiving peace, receiving joy. And then freely offering it to others.

Furthermore, if the farmer is mean and treats the oxen terribly, they will rebel and soon give up too. And if its both, its over before the work even gets started. This is why Jesus says that he is “gentle and lowly in heart.” He wants to make clear he is not a cruel farmer. The words gentle means, “humble, meek, mild and kind.” It is used by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount – blessed are the gentle or meek, for they shall inherit the earth. It is also the same word used for “gentleness” as one of the fruits of the Spirit. Jesus is saying that when you are connected to me, I will not treat you meanly but kindly, gently and with humility. I will not use my superior authority to crush you or hurt you or insult you. I may gently prod you along at times. I may mildly nudge you to keep moving or to get you moving, but I will not overdo it. I am gentle, not harsh, not severe, not overbearing. The word “lowly” is even a stronger version of gentle. It means unpretentious, low status, humble, the opposite of prideful. This is Jesus of Nazareth. Who, being God did not consider this as something to be used to his own advantage, but emptied and lowered himself by taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness (Philippians 2:5-7). This is the lowliness that Jesus is speaking of. It is a very loud and convincing posture of love.

Third, we are to learn from Jesus of Nazareth. What are we to learn? “Everything that Jesus has commanded” (Matthew 28:20). More specifically in this context, gentleness and lowliness. The ox is not above its master but submits to their leadership. The disciple of Jesus is not above their Lord but submits to his leadership. When we take up the character and posture of humble disciples of Jesus who seek to represent him and his good news message of salvation without pretention, pride, meanness, harshness or hostility we are learning! When we live out being the student of Jesus and stop trying to be his master or his teacher, we are learning. And when we do this, with whatever load he has us pulling in whatever terrain he has us pull it in, we will find rest!



Really? Yes. How? **Jesus has already done the heavy lifting. He has done the work.** He has carried the burden of the yoke of his cross. He has carried our impossible burden of the requirements of a perfect life so that we would not have to. He has carried our impossible burden of facing our deserved punishment and the wrath of God for our wickedness so that we would not have to. He overcame the impossible burden of sin so that we would not have to. He endured the impossible and eternal weight of death so that we would not have to. He overcame the impossible burden of death so that we might receive eternal life in him. Jesus did all the work. That is why he said, "It is finished!" It is finished means there is nothing for us to do to earn our salvation in Jesus Christ. We receive. We rest.

So, what about all the burdens that we mentioned at the beginning? All the burdens of daily life? How are they connected with the last three paragraphs? What does taking up Jesus' yoke and our cross (Matthew 17) have to do with the gospel and rest? Well, a myriad of practical ways. We stop trying to work at earning approval – we are already approved by God in Christ. **What more approval can we possibly need?** We stop trying to work for belonging – we already belong to God and his kingdom as his children and as citizens and are united to him through the Holy Spirit. **What more belonging can we possibly need.** We stop trying to work for security. We already are secured by God in Christ. He is our shelter. He is Almighty. What can any human do to us? Nothing can separate us from the love of God – nothing. **What more security do we need?** We stop trying to work for God's favor. God already is our "favor" in Christ. He is for us. He loves us. He cares for us. He gifts us with all eternally good things. He favors us with his presence and with his love and with his grace and with his forgiveness and with goodness and with his providence and with his written Word, the Bible. **What more favor could we possibly need?** When we get this, really get this and appropriate it in our daily lives, we walk in the freedom of the newness of life as new creations in Christ. Freedom is not a burden. The securing of freedom is – any veteran or family of a fallen soldier will testify to that. **Jesus fought and won our freedom. He did the work. We rest.**

Yes, there are struggles and difficulties. There is pain and sorrow. There are broken and dysfunctional relationships. We contribute to that and we run into it from others. That is the burdens that we add to our lives and that others add to our lives. Psalm 55:22 says we are told to toss our burdens on the Lord and he will support you. Interesting. Both burden and self are supported by God. God supports us as we navigate these burdens. In him we find strength and support. Also, when we recognize and confess our contributions to sinful burdens, we are going to God and we are forgiven. We rest in him. But we also go to the other if the sin is against another and seek reconciliation. And we rest knowing we are doing all we can in Christ. Galatians 6:2 says we are to help each other carry our burdens. We do not do this alone but come alongside each other to help. How might we help others with their burdens (not loads, we are to carry our own loads, or own responsibilities as adult disciples and not lazily and sinfully expect others to do that work for us). Finally, when we live with Jesus each day in the various things we are doing at home, school, and in the neighborhood, life takes on another level of meaning and vigor and reality. **It takes on a gospel or kingdom vigor and reality. It lifts us out of our small little stories and re-orientates us to the bigger, eternal narrative and divine drama we are a part of.** And things look a lot different from there. Mundane activities become kingdom activities done with God. Chores and work become opportunities to contribute to not just our home or community, but to the kingdom of God! This kingdom perspective is a peaceful, graceful, loving perspective and posture that



fosters rest and renewal and restoration in and through Jesus Christ by the person and power of the Holy Spirit.

So, next time you need to sigh and take a big breath, go to Jesus, take up his yoke and learn from him. You will find rest for your souls. Guaranteed.

Communion Meditation

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
The holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting.
Amen!**

Proclaiming: 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, "this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, "this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

Remember and believe that the body and blood of Jesus was given and shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Song: Let Your Kingdom Come -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Rh8i0r9glA>

*Your glorious cause, O God
Engages our hearts
May Jesus Christ be known
Wherever we are
We ask not for ourselves, but for Your renown
Your grace has saved us so we pray
Your kingdom come
Let Your kingdom come
Let Your will be done*



*So that everyone might know Your Name
Let Your song be heard everywhere on earth
Till Your sovereign work on earth is done
Let Your kingdom come*

*Give us Your strength, O God
And courage to speak
Perform Your wondrous deeds
Through those who are weak
Lord use us as You want, whatever the test
By grace we'll preach Your gospel
Till our dying breath*

*Let Your kingdom come
Let Your will be done
So that everyone might know Your Name
Let Your song be heard everywhere on earth
Till Your sovereign work on earth is done
Let Your kingdom come*

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

Read together our sending, thinking of the next 100 people that will join us in demonstrating Christ's love, growing faithfully in discipleship and sharing the hope we have in Jesus.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!