

## Matthew 11.25-30

Read Isa 29.13-21; Sir 51.23-27; Acts 15.6-11 (esp. v.10)

V. familiar 'comfortable words' from Cranmer's 1549 BCP invitation to the Lord's Supper.

### Immediate Context

1. John's question and Jesus' response (vv.1-19)
2. Woes upon unrepentant cities – Chorazin and Capernaum (vv.20-24)

vv.20-24 describe the condemned – those who are blind and deaf to/hardened against what God is doing in Christ, in spite of “the mighty works he has done”.  
vv.25-30 describe the invited/welcome/accepted – those to whom Jesus has chosen to reveal the Father

### **vv.25-30**

#### **1. Relationship between Father and Son**

a. Jesus thanks/praises his Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that he has hidden these things from the wise and understanding and has revealed them to little children

- *Instead of getting depressed/discouraged, acknowledges the sovereignty, wisdom and grace of the hidden God.  
Who is free to do/act as he pleases, and to choose to reveal himself to whom he pleases.*
- *Jesus rejoices in his Father's will. Whatever pleases Father pleases him*

b. Jesus acknowledges that his Father has handed over “all things” (= in terms of revealing the Father and what he is up to) to him

- *“all things” = the revealing of the Father and what he is up to*
- *the Son has the authority choose who he reveals them to*
- *The Son reveals the Father, who he knows intimately.*
- *Keener: **Jesus alone**, not the wise/learned/intelligent, is in a position to declare what God is exactly like... Anyone who approaches God in a different way will not find him.*
- *the Father can **only be known through him** (to whom the scriptures point). No mortal could make such a claim (cf. John 1.1-2).*
- *Jesus here effectively describes himself as the wisdom of God. Cf. 1 Cor 1.24 “to those who are called... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” and Job 28.12ff.*

## 2. Basis for Jesus' rejection/condemnation of "wise and understanding" (much of whose time was spent in study and pious practices)

- *Whereas John questioned God's plan in Jesus, the wise and understanding opposed it – hardness of heart revealed in attitudes to John and Jesus (vv.16-19), and Jesus' mighty works (him which Jesus says will, when reported to John, convince)*
- *intellectual pride, not intellectual power, is the problem.*
- *Consequently the revelation of God is hidden from them, even though they pride themselves on the knowledge of God's word/scriptures*
- *Problem not in God's word but in **the human heart** (as receptor). As in the beginning (Gen 3), humans deceived in their hearing of God's word and deliberately distort it. Cf. for example, 9.13; 23.4.*
- *Moreover, they **take offence** that God favoured the lowly*
- *The idea of **human wisdom** not being all that humans think it is, is commonplace in Scripture, e.g. Jer 8.8-9; 1 Cor 1.18-25.*
- *Wisdom is ultimately measured in terms of knowledge and fear of God, thus the ultimate fool is he who denies God's existence (Ps 14.1).*

## 3. Basis for Jesus' invitation to "those who labour and are heavy laden"

- *In original context addressed to **the Law-burdened**, i.e. those burdened by the "wise and understanding", whom Jesus has condemned*
- *the burden came not from the law of Moses itself, but from their traditions and misapplication of the Law – see 23.5-7; 6.1-6, 16-18*
- *Jesus charged the scribes... with 'transgressing the commandment of God for the sake of their tradition' (Matt 15.3). He said that by their application of the law 'they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders' (Matt 23.4).*
- *He calls on them to put the emphasis on the "weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faithfulness" (23.23) and the double commandment to love (22.37-40)*
- *surely **applicable to all burdens not from God** but from man, (religions, govts, societal, work, even family etc. - invariably masquerading as giving freedom but placing under bondage. Note esp. effect on children.*
- *It is from those who labour and are heavy laden that Jesus finds greatest acceptance. They are **less proud and self-sufficient**, more open to what Jesus claims for himself.*
- *They too are humble and meek – see 18.1-4.*

#### 4. The Invitation/Comfortable Words: Jesus and his yoke

- *Yoke' = what/who submitted to (Gen 27.40; Isa 9.4; 10.27; 14.25; Gal 5.1): Torah (Jer 5.4-5; Sir 51.23, 25-26; Acts 15.10; Gal 5.1), or Jesus the Christ?*
- *Conscious reapplication of Sir 51.23-27 to himself. It is not the Torah that the weary and burdened are invited to submit to, but the authority of **Jesus himself**.*
- *The fact that Jesus can say 'my yoke' is a claim "to authority from the Father greater than that of Moses himself (cf. Deut 18.18)*
- *Jesus tells all who come to him to "learn from me", i.e. to bear Jesus' yoke the way they have seen him bear it himself (cf. 12.1-2)*
- ***Joy in bearing Jesus' yoke simply because it's his***
- *The Hollies' hit song *He aint heavy, he's my brother*. (1969) James Wells, Moderator of the [United Free Church of Scotland](#), tells the story of a little girl carrying a big baby boy in his 1884 book *The Parables of Jesus*. Seeing her struggling, someone asked if she wasn't tired. With surprise she replied: "No, he's not heavy; he's my brother."<sup>[1]</sup>*
- *The lightness of Jesus' yoke does not refer to a loosening of all the law of Moses, but to the cultic and civil laws fulfilled in Jesus, as illustrated in 12.1-8. Obedience to Jesus **has purpose** – love of God . Yoke = **to reveal Jesus to others**.*
- *It is also 'easy' 'fits well' – each of us, crafted for us so as not to cause chafing or needless discomfort.*
- *Also it is lighter because he is a master/**Lord who cares** for them – even lay down his life for them. He is the suffering servant – as spelt out in the next chapter (12.18-21).*
- *Bearing Jesus' yoke is also made easy because of the work of **the Holy Spirit**., giving the same heart as Jesus and empowering him to testify to Jesus (as Jesus testified to the Father) – see Jn 15.26-27. That is why we must **remain in the vine**,*

#### 5. What rest will it give?

- *In **this age** – **freedom from other demands**/demands of others*
- *The rest Jesus offers is not inactivity, but a less burdensome way of fulfilling God's will and purposes*
- ***Eschatological rest** (through salvation)*

#### Suggested Discussion Questions

1. How do we see the sort of contrariness which Jesus bemoans in vv.16-19 displayed in 'our generation'/today?

2. What does Jesus mean by 'the wise and understanding'? Refer to *Jer 8.8-9*; *1 Cor 1.18-25*.
3. What are some of the things which we regard as burdens today which we should be freed from when we take on Christ's yoke?
4. Are there burdens which you (personally) needlessly bear, and which God wants to relieve you of?
5. Do you consider yourself to have received the rest Jesus promises in himself? What does that look like for you?
6. How do you understand eternal rest? How significant is it to your thinking and the way you see this life?