

THE ONE WHO IS COMPASSION

Matthew 11:1-30

January 28, 2018

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

Matthew has just reported Christ’s scathing rebuke upon the cities that rejected Him. Their doom would be worse than that of Sodom. Their greater condemnation arose from the fact that the works of Christ that they rejected would have brought pagan cities unto repentance. With the text we cite today, Christ exhibits the opposite: compassion upon all who will come to Him, and He invites the least of humanity unto Himself, promising them rest unto their souls.

The invitation is notable because of the one who makes it. He is “meek and lowly in heart.” He is the one who can make soul-rest certain, not by strenuous effort of burdened souls, but by His easy yoke and light burden. He is the one who does so by having borne our griefs and our sorrows, by having our iniquities laid upon Him, and by bearing our sin in His body. His sincerity is exhibited by having offered Himself as the substitute and sacrifice for sinners by crucifixion on a cross (Isaiah 53:4-6; I Peter 2:24).

The invitation is notable because of its substance. It is not an invitation to religion, to rules and rituals that promise acceptance with God if embraced. Rather, it is the simple invitation to a person who assures that the yoke and burden of coming to Him is light, so light that it will give rest to the soul, rather than labor and burdens. It is an invitation to learn of Christ.

The invitation is notable because it is directed to those who have nothing to contribute, those who are restless, who labor and are heavy laden. Their coming would not enrich Christ. It would not make His path easier nor lighten His burden. Their “vote” would not ensure His victory nor advance His reputation.

By calling “all ye that labor and are heavy laden,” Christ sets before us two categories of human beings: those who labor and are heavy laden, and those who do not labor nor are heavy laden. He is speaking of spiritual burden, not physical, for that which He offers is spiritual rest. Those who labor and are heavy laden spiritually, to them He calls, “come unto me.” He passes by the others.

Christ taught, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17). The Pharisee deemed himself to be righteous as he was, but the publican was clearly laboring and heavy laden with guilt. Christ commended the publican (Luke 18:10-14). To Israel’s chief priests and elders Jesus said, “John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him” (Matthew 21:32). The self-righteous see no need in their souls, and are excluded. The consciously unrighteous, heavily burdened by their sinfulness, are called unto Christ, and in Him

they find rest for their souls.