

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**January 24, 2010**

***Evidences of Jesus as Messiah***  
**Declared in Prayer**

Matthew 11:25-30

**Key verse: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).**

Maybe you have seen the message on a bumper sticker or a t-shirt. It says, “All stressed out and no place to go.”

A frazzled mother of four said it this way: “My life is on a treadmill and the OFF button is forever out of reach.”

A businessman put it more succinctly when he said: “Life is relentless!”

Into the pressure cooker of our stressed-out, over-burdened lives, Jesus’ words come as a gracious possibility. Here is how the Amplified Version paraphrases Matthew 11:28-30 – “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and over-burdened, and I will cause you to rest—I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest—relief, ease, and refreshment and re-creation for your souls. For my yoke is wholesome—not harsh, hard, sharp or pressing, but comfortable, gracious and pleasant; and my burden is light and easy to be borne.”

Jesus never makes empty promises. We can be sure that He has an answer for the stress and strain that sometimes threatens to overwhelm us. But how do we appropriate into our daily living the kind of lifting-of-burdens that Jesus offers?

Sometimes, in order to understand how something works, we have to understand how it doesn’t work. And one wrong way to handle the stress and burdens of life is the way of *solo self-effort*. We will not find rest and relief by trying this or that program of improvement through self-effort. We find relief in our over-burdened lives as we learn to respond to Jesus’ invitation: “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

An Indian Christian wrote this motto on the wall of a Christian retreat center there in India: “Not my responsibility, but my response to His ability.” If we are to experience the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise, we must learn—in the midst of carrying heavy loads and managing stressful lives—how to walk with Him and lean on His strength.

E. Stanley Jones, the Methodist missionary and author, wrote: “The Christian life is not a struggle; it’s a surrender—a surrender to Christ, and therefore to everything

that is in Him. Fully surrendered to Christ, I am strong in His strength, pure in His purity, loving in His love, victorious in His victory.”

“Come to me,” Jesus said, “all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Then he adds, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

It seems ironic that Jesus promises relief from our heavy burdens by asking us to pick up an instrument of labor, the yoke: “For my yoke,” He says, “is easy and my burden is light.” The word “easy” in the New Testament Greek is the word *chrestos*. It means “well fitting.” In the Palestine of Jesus’ time, the yokes that oxen wore were made of wood. The ox would be brought to the yoke maker, who would make measurements of the ox’s neck. Then he would carve the yoke to fit the ox in such a way that it would not rub the ox’s neck raw. The yoke was tailor made to fit the ox.

Jesus is saying, “My yoke fits you just right. If you will come to me, if you will surrender to me, if you will stay yoked up with me, you will be able to pull the burdens of life without getting rubbed raw!”

On the other hand, *religion* can be a terrible burden. These words of Jesus, in their context, were a rebuke to a kind of religiosity that puts people in ill-fitting yokes. Jesus said of the religious leaders of his day: “You tie up heavy burdens, and hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others” (Matthew 23:4). A religion of rules and regulations, a religion of self-effort and of human-centered efforts at self-improvement—that kind of religion is a burden, not a blessing.

Real Christianity is not so much about religion as it is about a *relationship*. Jesus doesn’t say “come be religious.” Jesus says “Come to me....and learn from me”—that is, come and get to know me.

Some religious person gave this definition of a saint. He defined a saint as “someone who tries a little harder.” That’s a terrible definition. A much better definition was given by someone who one day saw the sunlight streaming through a church’s stained-glass window: “A saint is someone who lets the light shine through.” That is a much better definition. A saint is someone who lets the light of Jesus shine through.

The first definition is a recipe for the kind of religion that burdens you down and wears you out from trying in your own strength. But the second definition describes a person who surrenders, moment by moment, to the Lord—and lets His light shine through.

So, when the boss is on a tirade...when the big deal is hanging by a thread...when it’s all up to you and there’s no time to do it.... In those kinds of moments, we can learn to look up in surrender and trust—and let the light of Christ shine through us.

Jesus says, "Come to me...learn from me...." Come trust me. Come put my yoke on you. Come discover that there is no problem you will face that the two of us pulling together cannot handle.

Thanks be to God.

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