



Matthew 11:28-30

**Idea:** Like a heavenly hound, Jesus is hot on your trail because the greatest need in your life is to be in relationship with Him.

**Intro:** Today is Easter Sunday, a big day of celebration for Christians. We often commemorate the days that historical figures were born, died, or accomplished a major feat during their lives. We turn them into holidays. For example, Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929. We celebrate his contribution to the civil rights movement around his birthday on the third Monday in January.

Christianity has two major holy days each year. On Christmas we celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoice in the fact that God came to dwell among humanity. Then on Easter we celebrate the resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that God the Son, Jesus Christ, lived a perfect life on earth. He called upon people to follow Him. Jesus made an exclusive claim. He said that He was the way, the truth, and the life and that no one can come to the

Father but through Him. Jesus validated His claim to be God through miracles. The Bible tells us that Jesus turned water into wine, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the deaf to hear, calmed the storms, fed thousands from a young boy's lunch, and raised the dead. Jesus' message and ministry gave Him quite a large following. In fact His message and ministry made Him a threat to the Roman governor and the religious leaders in Israel, so they crucified Him. The Bible, though, says that Jesus' life was not taken from Him. He freely laid it down as a sacrifice. Jesus' death wasn't that of a martyr but that of a Savior. Jesus's sacrificial death was a substitute for you and me. Jesus died a death He did not deserve in order to settle a debt we could not pay (2 Cor 5:21). The Bible says that His blood was shed for the forgiveness of sin.

After Jesus' death upon the cross His body was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Three days later, He arose from the grave. The Jesus who was killed on the cross on Friday gloriously walked out of the grave on Sunday. His resurrection conquered death, hell, and the grave (1 Cor 15). He proved that He was God.

Christianity is the only religion whose leader died and was raised to life again to live forever more. So the resurrection sets Jesus apart from every one else. His sacrifice and message is exclusive and must not be easily dismissed.

This raises a serious question: Why did Jesus have to die on the cross? The Bible tells us that it was His purpose for coming. Jesus' mission was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). The Bible makes it clear that because of Adam's sin every person is born into this world a sinner (Romans 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22). Everyone, then, is in rebellion against the God who created him or her. They are not seeking God and want nothing to do with Him (Romans 3). God, however, loves us (John 3:16). He has demonstrated His love for us by coming to dwell among us and by taking the punishment for our sins upon Himself (Romans 5:8). Today, He seeks after you. He longs to rescue you from your wonderings in lostness and to bring you to Himself.

Everyone outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ is hurting and broken by sin. You are overwhelmed by guilt and shame. You have made decisions in your life that are humiliating. Our closets are full of skeletons. Some are gripped by fear. The certainty of the uncertain cripples you. The thought of death torments you. Perhaps, in arrogance others think that they are good and in need of nothing today. Your pride deceives you into thinking you have no need for the God who created you for Himself (Col 1:16), but the reality is sin has broken and cut you off from God. Every one of us apart from Christ is spiritually dead and in need of life (Eph 2:1).

All of us are hurting and broken within...we are overwhelmed by the weight of sin. But I have good news on this resurrection Sunday; Jesus is calling, and His arms are opened wide.

Read Matthew 11:28-30.

**Inquiry:** In chapter 11, Matthew is moving the spotlight from John the Baptist to Jesus. He shows how many of people had rejected John's message as the forerunner of the Messiah. He also shows how they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah (Matt 11:18-19). In doing so, Matthew contrasts the rebellion of mankind with the grace of Jesus. Here Matthew reveals to us that Jesus is the promised Messiah (vs. 11-19), the authoritative Judge (vs. 20-24), the sovereign Son (vs. 25-27), and the gracious Master (vs. 28-30). The text is full of wonder: the Son of God, the revelation of the Father, the One who represents the Trinity before man, says, "Come to Me." We have here an explanation of Christianity that is radically different from every other religious system in the history of the world.

The religions of the world passively tell people what things they need to do in order to earn their way to whatever is promised. They start with man's ability and end with man's accomplishment. The Christian gospel begins with Jesus' ability and ends with Jesus' accomplishment. Jesus is speaking in the active voice. He is not passively standing by. No, He is

pursuing sinners (11:27-28). Like a heavenly hound, Jesus is hot on your trail because the greatest need in your life is to be in relationship with Him. Your greatest need is not to get a better job, to fix your marriage, to reconnect with your children, to be healed, or to get out from under the weight of your financial debt. The greatest need for all of us is to experience the forgiveness of sin that comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ. For that reason, Jesus came. For that reason Jesus endured the suffering of the cross. For that reason Jesus shed His blood. For that reason Jesus rose from the grave. He did it for you. He did it because He loves you. On this resurrection Sunday, the arms of Jesus are opened wide. He is calling.

### **1. Jesus calls you to come.**

Heavy is the load of sin. Laborious and burdensome are man's religious systems with their rites, and ceremonies, sacraments and sacrifices, tithes and offerings, rules and regulations, penances and fasts, long prayers and tedious catechisms. Jesus swept those burdens all away.

In Christ's appeal, *labor* is countered with *give*, and *heavy laden* is countered with *rest*. The rest Jesus offers cannot be bought, merited, or earned. It is a gift. There is nothing to do but come and rest.

Appl: Do you need rest today? Are you tired of wondering whether or not God loves and accepts you? Are you tired of wondering if your good deeds will outweigh your bad deeds? Are you tired of striving in your own strength to make your life and family better?

This morning Jesus says, "Come to Me, and I will give you rest." But what does this invitation involve?

### **2. Jesus calls you to give.**

We are called to give all we have to Jesus. The imagery in this passage is of a yoke (vs. 29), a heavy wooden bar that fits over the neck of an ox so that it can pull a cart or plow. The yoke could be put on one animal or shared between two animals. In a shared yoke, one of the oxen would often be much stronger than the other. The stronger ox was more schooled in the commands of the master, so it would guide the other according to the master's commands. By coming into the yoke with the stronger ox, the weaker ox could learn to obey the master's voice.

In these verses, Jesus was speaking to self-righteous people who were burdened down with laws, rules, regulations, and commandments. Many of these laws had come from God in the Old Testament, while religious leaders had added others. The people were burdened down because they had failed over and over again to keep the law, and as the leaders poured on more laws, the people felt more and more guilt. The weight of their sin became heavier, and they could not stand up under it.

In contrast to the scribes and Pharisees who had loaded the people down with religion, Jesus called the weary and burdened to come to Him. He called them to give Him the full weight of all their sin. Jesus too calls you to give Him the full weight of all your sin. He doesn't call you to give Him some of it, but rather all of it. And it is not just the weight of our sin that we give to Jesus; we give Him our complete and utter inability to obey God.

The commands of God are not bad; they are good. But the commands cannot be carried out in our own strength because we are imperfect, sinful people, and we cannot obey the Master's voice. The call to come to Christ is definitely not a call to try and reform your life and to be a better person – that is not Christianity.

The call is to give to Jesus our sin. It is to confess our rebellion and lostness.

### **3. Jesus calls you to receive.**

Rather than calling us to greater moral effort and to strive to be a better person, Jesus says, "Come to Me." The good news is that when we submit to Him, Jesus gives all He has to us. He is the stronger One, the One who alone is able to bear the weight of the Father's commands. This is the One who invites us into the yoke with Him. We give Him the full weight of our sin, and He gives us full pardon for all our sin. We are counted righteous in Christ because He paid the full debt of our sin with His blood and has obeyed the very law we could not obey (2 Cor 5:21).

We give Jesus our sin and receive forgiveness for sin, peace with God, and strength to live lives that please God (vs. 29-30).

**Conclusion:** I don't know of a better deal than that. What a great exchange! I give to God my mess and He gives me a new life (2 Cor 5:17). This is the Christian life. This is what Jesus has done in my life. Like the prodigal son in Luke 15, I had rebelled against my Father and ran away from Him. I strived to make my own way through religious efforts. I thought my efforts would be good enough, but they were only the slopping efforts of a man who lives with pigs. All the while Jesus was standing, waiting, and ready to receive me. His arms were opened wide as He called me to Himself. And when I turned to Jesus, I was received as a son. I was forgiven of all my sin. I received the full benefits of sonship, and a celebration was made in heaven (Luke 15:10).

Today, Jesus calls to you. Will you come to Him? Will you give Him your sin? Will you receive from Him forgiveness and eternal life?