

“Come”; “Take”; “Learn”

Matthew 11: 25-30

By: Hamilton Smith

There are certain passages in the Word of God that are especially endeared to the hearts of all that love our Lord Jesus, inasmuch as they very definitely set forth the loveliness of Christ. Among such portions we may well include the six closing verses of Matthew 11, for in these verses we see the perfection of Christ shining out in one of the darkest moments of His earthly pathway.

The passage opens with the words, “At that time.” We may well pause to enquire, what was “that time”? The preceding chapters bring before us the Lord's ministry in the midst of Israel. He had presented Himself in all the glory of His Person as Emmanuel — God with us — cleansing the leper with a touch, healing the centurion's servant with a word, and commanding the demons to depart (8). He had revealed the grace of His heart in forgiving sins, in sitting down to eat with sinners, in raising the dead, opening the eyes of the blind, and in making the dumb to speak. He had revealed the tender love of His heart by suffering in His spirit the sorrows that He took away by His power, and had expressed His compassions for those who were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. He had shown the lowly grace of His heart by entering the humble home of a fisherman, by preaching the gospel to the poor, and by becoming so poor that He had nowhere to lay His head.

What response did the nation give to the One who expressed His grace by becoming poor in order to show forth His love and power on behalf of sinful men in relieving them of every sorrow and pressure, even of death itself?

Alas! Some besought Him to depart; others said “This man blasphemeth.” Again there were those who laughed Him to scorn; others said He was a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. The leaders said “He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.” They insulted Him, defamed Him, and thus speaking and acting against Him, they fulfilled His own touching words, “They have rewarded Me evil for good, and hatred for my love” (Ps. 109: 5). It thus becomes clear that “that time” was the time of His utter rejection by the nation of Israel.

This then was the answer the nation gave to all His love and grace. But what answer did the Lord give to all the insults and scorn that men heaped upon Him? Did He assert His sovereign rights, and fall back upon His royal power by which He could have silenced every opposer and crushed every foe? He had, indeed, warned the nation of the judgment that would overtake them, but He utters no word of resentment, He uses no threats, He is not moved to any act of revenge. In like spirit, a little later, in the last closing scenes, in the presence of false witnesses, “Jesus held His peace.” Before Pilate, when accused by the chief priests, “He answered him to never a word”; and yet again, before the mocking Herod, “He answered him nothing.”

If then He was silent, if He took no revenge upon His enemies, was it that He had no resource? Far from it; but His resource was not to vilify His enemies and turn upon His foes, but to turn to

the Father in prayer. As He can say, “For my love they are my adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer” (Ps. 109: 4). So Peter can write of the Lord, in his Epistle, “Who when He was reviled, reviled not again: when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” The answer then to all the insults men heaped upon Him is seen in the threefold perfection that it called forth from the Lord.

First, “that time” brought to light His perfect and unshaken confidence in the Father's love. He finds His resource in turning in prayer to the Father — the One who loves Him, and who has all power as the Lord of heaven and earth. No circumstances, however terrible, are allowed for one moment to call in question the Father's love, or the power of the Lord of heaven and earth. Nor does the Lord turn to the Father, calling for revenge upon His enemies, but with thanks that, in spite of all the hatred and opposition of men and devils, divine love and divine power are carrying out the Father's purposes. These counsels of love pass by those who by their wisdom know not God, and proclaim the gospel to the poor who have no resources, and make known the Father to the babes who make no pretension.

Moreover, a second great perfection comes to light. With perfect confidence in the Father's love and power, the Lord perfectly submits to the Father's will. Thus He can say, “Even so Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” If carrying out the Father's will entails the hatred and scorn of men, He will submit. A little later, Peter, in his fleshly zeal, may draw a sword to resist those who oppose His Master; but, the Lord, Himself, can say, “Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18: 11).

Furthermore, the sorrowful circumstances bring into prominence a third perfection of the Lord, for He can say, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” In perfect meekness He gave way rather than assert His rights, and in perfect lowliness He refused to exalt Himself. As He passed through this world he ignored self in order to serve others in love.

Thus the darkest moment of His pathway becomes the occasion of bringing into display the moral excellencies of Christ, as seen in His perfect confidence in the Father's love; His perfect submission to the Father's will, and the meekness and lowliness of heart that could think of everything, and everyone but self.

Thus, in a threefold way the loveliness of Christ shines forth. If, however, we are to profit by Christ as our perfect pattern it will not be enough to admire His excellencies, we must also give heed to His three exhortations: First, “Come unto Me”; Secondly, “Take my yoke,” and, Thirdly, “Learn of Me.”

“Come unto Me.” Israel's rejection of Christ cannot stay the grace of God: indeed, it becomes the occasion for that grace to flow out to all, Jew and Gentile alike. Therefore the Lord can say, “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” However great the burden of sins we are welcome to come, even as the woman who was a sinner found in the house of Simon, and as a poor thief found when nailed on a cross. As another has written, it is as if the Lord said, “If you are a poor woman, not fit to face any of your fellow creatures, come to Me; I will have you, trust Me: if you are hanging on a cross for your crimes, you shall go up today with Me to paradise. My blood is enough to put your crimes away: my heart is open to receive you.” Weary with our

vain efforts to meet our condition, and burdened with our sins, how good to hear His words of love, “Come unto Me,” and, in His presence, discover that He knows the worst about us, and yet He loves us. Then to learn that loving us He has died for us, and that the holy God is so satisfied with what Christ has done that He has raised Him from the dead and seated Him in the glory, and that the one that believes in Him is justified from all things, and is as clear of the judgment that his sins deserve as Christ, Himself, in the glory. Thus it is He brings peace to the conscience, and we realise the truth of His words, “I will give you rest.”

“Take My yoke.” The yoke implies service taken up in submission to the will of another. With our natural tendency to self-importance we may seek to be among the Lord's people as those that rule and exercise lordship, but He could say, “I am among you as He that serveth.” Moreover, it is not service according to our own wills, or doing what we think best; but service according to His thoughts and in obedience to His will. It is not simply “a yoke” that we are asked to take, but “His yoke.” Coming to Him as needy sinners He will give us rest; taking His yoke as believers we shall find rest. Martha, who served the Lord according to her thoughts was distracted and “cumbered about much serving.”

“Learn of Me.” If, then, our service is to be according to His will and pleasure we shall need to remember the Lord's third great exhortation, “Learn of Me.” This involves, not only that we learn the service He would have us to take up, but that we learn His blessed character, so that we not only do the right thing, but we do it in the right spirit. Therefore the Lord's desire is first, that we should take up His service in submitting to His yoke; secondly, that we should exhibit His character as the One Who is “meek and lowly in heart.”

We can learn of one another; we can learn by the prayerful study of the word; but to learn of Him implies that we are in His presence and keep His company. As the Lord could say a little later, “If any man serve Me, let him follow Me” (John 12: 26). It is not, indeed, that He will give us any fresh revelation beyond that which is made known to us in the word; but, in His presence we learn the blessed reality of all that the word reveals. Paul can write to Timothy, “Consider what I say: and the Lord will give thee understanding” (2 Tim. 2: 7). An Apostle may be used to reveal the truth, but the Lord alone can give understanding of the truth revealed. It is good indeed to have the doctrine set forth with all the authority of God's written word; but good, also, when the written word turns us to the living Word to see the truth set forth in all its perfection in HIM.

In His Person there is brought before us, in a way that must deeply affect us, all the moral excellencies and spiritual graces that marked every step of His path of devoted service. We look up to Him in the glory as our object and our hope, but we look back to His perfect pathway to learn in Him the spirit that should mark His people as they pass through this world. In Him we see our perfect example, for He was “meek and lowly in heart.” It is still possible, like Mary of old, to sit at His feet and hear His word, and learning of Him we shall catch something of His spirit and express something of His lovely character. It has been truly said, “There is so much Christian service in the world which lacks true strength and beauty, because it stands too little connected with the source of all service, with Christ Himself, and is too little founded on the word of God. There are so many believers who like Martha, are busied about many things, but alas! have neither the desire, nor quietness enough, to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to His precious word. To spend an hour alone with the Lord would be to them far more difficult than to

labour the whole day about all sorts of things. And whence comes this? It demands a far more spiritual mind to tarry in His presence than to be occupied with service. In the latter even nature can find some satisfaction, while in His presence it must be entirely set aside.”

Furthermore, if we learn of Him, we shall not only take up His service in His spirit, but, in the presence of all the sorrows and trials of life, the desertions and disappointments, the insults and malice we may have to meet, we shall act as He acted. We shall not allow any of these things to call in question the Father's love, but, like Christ, we shall make them the occasion of turning to the Father in prayer, of confiding in the Father's love, and submitting to the Father's will. In the spirit of meekness we shall be quiet in the presence of every insult. With the lowly mind we shall refuse to exalt self and seek, rather, to ignore self while seeking to serve others in love. Thus acting like the Master we shall find rest to our souls.

*Then seek to please Him, whatsoever He bids thee,
Whether to do, to suffer, or be still;
'Twill matter little by what path He leads us,
If in it all we sought to do His will.*

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