

November 6, 2016

## REST FOR YOUR SOULS

Matthew 11:25-30

LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH -- Jesus offers a short, two-verse prayer, praising God for hiding *these things* from *the wise and learned*, and revealing *these things* to *little children*. (v. 25) First, however, note the very profound theological truth revealed in His address to God. He calls God, "*Father, Lord of Heaven and earth!*" This should not go unnoticed. Though we may take the phrase *Lord of Heaven and earth* for granted today, as we consider our God, the Father of Jesus Christ, calling God His Father is very understandable. He taught His disciples to pray by addressing God as *Our Father*. He told Mary and Joseph, when He was twelve, and they thought they'd lost Him in Jerusalem, "*Didn't you know I had to be in My Father's House?*" (Luke 2:49) But here, others (at least His Disciples) hear Him refer to God as His Father. This affirms before them a glorious depth in the connection Jesus had with God. In the Gospel of John, Jesus teaches them, "*If you really knew Me, you would know My Father as well. From now on, You do know Him, and you have seen Him!*" ( 14:7) Jesus also tells them, "*Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father... I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me!*" (John 14:9, 10)

But Jesus is praying to God as His Father. Out loud. Out loud, so they can hear and begin to understand something important. But, He's also praying to God as "*Lord of Heaven and Earth.*" God is not just Lord of Heaven, and God is not just Lord of earth. He is Lord of both. He is Lord of all. He is also creator of both. Both are good, both are His, and both are under His Lordship. We have a tendency to separate them too far apart. We shouldn't. Even the Apostles' Creed affirms that God is maker of Heaven and earth!

The prayer praises God for having hidden *these things* from *the wise and learned*. What are *these things*? Well, they could be the sum of all His teaching so far. It also affirms that His teaching is for the *little children*. It is common knowledge. You don't need to be *wise and learned* in order to hear them or understand them. But I think we need to acknowledge that this prayer comes at the conclusion of this particular day in the life of Christ. So realize that earlier in this Chapter, Jesus had spoken about John the Baptist, and how no one was greater; "*yet they who are least in the Kingdom of Heaven are greater than he.*" (10:11) Jesus has spoken about the generation of His peers and how they were like children who couldn't be satisfied no matter what type of game they were invited to play; and He said that "*Wisdom is proven right by her actions,*" or, "*vindicate by her children.*" (10:19) And the last thing Jesus had done before He begins this little prayer is denounce the cities where He had done so many of His miracles, because... "*they did not repent,*" especially Capernaum, His home town. These things are hidden from the wise and learned because they just don't *get it*, primarily because they don't accept Christ as having any real authority, which they should simply by virtue of His wonderful healing ministry.

Some people don't *get it* because they think they've already *got it*. They think they know it all. They have an arrogance about them. They claim to be wise and yet they are foolish. We can all think, probably, of dozens of examples of how those who have great worldly smarts can also have a bad case of the stupids. Like the brilliant businessman who is a lousy husband, or the sharp nurse who just can't get it right as a mother; or the pastor who lets their kids go wild. No earthly intelligence is a guarantee of heavenly inspiration, nor, of salvation.

See First Corinthians 1:18-31, especially verse 25 – "*The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of humanity!*" So God's divine truth seems hidden to those who claim to be wise.

Some don't *get it* simply because they allow Satan to have a better hold on their hearts than God. They can't grasp the truth because they are in Satan's grasp! Some people don't *get it* simply because they're too shallow for the deeper truths to sink in. Some people don't *get it* because their

priorities don't include the things of faith. They care more about earthly things than about eternal truths.

So *these things* are hidden from *the wise and learned* but they are *revealed to little children*. This is not an issue of age, but an issue of a willingness to be receptive. Children are very receptive, willing to receive, to accept, to enjoy even simple things. They trust... very easily (which also makes them very vulnerable). But they trust because they have not yet been trained to put up social barriers, or, political or emotional barriers. It is these child-like qualities that give God the ability to reveal things to them. Remember how Jesus said, *"Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!"* (Matthew 18:3)

After His prayer, Jesus says, *"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him."* Jesus knew who was putting up barriers and who was open to receive. He chose to reveal His character and teaching to those who were sincerely open. I love Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John Three. You can see in Nicodemus a willingness to receive, he wants to understand, and yet he has intellectual barriers that go up when Jesus tries to tell him deep spiritual truths about being born again.

REST – How do you understand rest? Do you think of it is non-activity? If so, what would be meant by *rest for your souls*?

Jesus gives a wonderful invitation here: *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* (11:28) People who need a break need a break! Jesus is Sabbath. On the Seventh Day, God rested. *"God rested from all His work!"* (Genesis 2:2) *"And God blessed the Seventh Day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating."* (v. 3) The Fourth Commandment is: *"Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy."* (Exodus 29:8)

Coming to Jesus is a type of rest. Rest is restoration! Rest restores us. Imagine the laborer in the doldrums of making widgets over and over, day after day. But imagine that laborer who has come to Christ. Their life has taken on a whole new meaning. The most tedious task can now be done with a wonderful joy, because the believer can see a future glory, they can see beyond work. They have been energized by faith. Anything we do can be done to the glory of God. There is rest just in knowing this truth!

Still, when we are burdened and heavy laden, we need help. When we come to Christ, we become the Church. We gain a fellowship of help, yoke-fellows so to speak. Jesus says, *"Take My yoke upon you..."* (v. 29) There are two types of yoke. One is a neck-and-shoulder fitting bar that enables a person to hook fairly heavy objects onto either side. The weight is borne by the back instead of just the arms and shoulders., The yoke of Jesus is easy – it fits well and makes burden-bearing less wearisome.

The other type of yoke is the type that fits to beasts of burden, like two oxen. This type enables extremely heavy objects to be attached to the yoke and the two pull together. The image of pulling together is a great one for the Church. The idea, though, is that of sharing a yoke with Jesus. It is His yoke. He makes it easy, for, like a domesticated beast of burden, He is gentle and humble in heart. He doesn't insist on His own way. He pulls with you in partnership. Another good image of Christian fellowship – yokefellow.

REST FOR YOUR SOULS – Rest is restoration. There is a spiritual restoration that comes to us when we come to Jesus. It is more than peace, more than contentment, and more than serenity. It is all of these. These things are not necessarily a cessation of activity. But they are a gentleness, a humbleness, a lowliness of heart. They enable us to help and seek help when we are weary and heavy laden, and, when others need us. These things enable us to share the yoke, to pull together for the sake of the burden.

Finally, there is an eternal rest that is there in the background of Christ's words. The idea of rest for your souls conjures up the notion of the total grace of God's Kingdom of Heaven. Everlasting restoration... for your souls!

Come!