

Message Series: **'The Invitation: what will you do with yours?'**

Message Title: **'How Can I Experience Soul Rest?'**

Scripture Source: **Matthew 11:29-30**

Date: Sunday, June 3, 2018

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How Do You Experience Relief/Rest?

Jesus is talking with people, listening to people who are 'weary and burdened.' Whose lives are scarred with the painful weight of unrealistic expectations and harsh judgement. Scarred with frustration, guilt, shame, anger, fear and disappointment. The religious leaders by and large were of little help; in fact they trafficked in 'unattainable expectations and merciless condemnation.'

And Jesus sees and feels with unerring accuracy what is happening in people's lives, one precious life at a time.

Jesus comes close to the weary and burdened with a life giving invitation and offer. *"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."* Matthew 11:29-30 The relief and rest of soul Jesus offers is rooted in relationship, first and foremost with him.

Choose Submission to Jesus: Matthew 11:29

"Take my yoke upon you..." In ancient times this practical device was used to control and direct animals. It became a metaphor for submission to another. Pastor Paul instructed us about the custom fitting process of making yokes in ancient times. Let me underscore the customizing of yokes by using an example from the realm of tailoring! Illustrate: my 60th birthday suit, custom made just for me. My initials are in the jacket. I was measured and the suit made. It fits me well because it was tailored for me, not anyone else! Illustrate...someone else trying to wear, doesn't quite fit.

Jesus is stating that he has a custom made life purpose for each of us. Ephesians 2:10. Artistic language is used to underscore the point. Ephesians 4:16 *"as each part does its work."*

Friends, we experience the soul rest of God when our lives are marked by saying 'yes' to the authority and direction Jesus lays out for us and not being burdened or shaped by the expectations/demands of others. The 'yes's and 'no's' we choose shape and make our lives. Are we saying 'yes' to the superior invitation of Jesus to follow Him and fulfill his unique purpose for our lives? Or do we allow ourselves to be shaped by the expectations/demands of others, even if well intentioned? Starting on the home front.

With a spouse, child, adult child, grandchildren, friends...and the list goes on.

We need to be voices of constructive encouragement that are resolved to help each other learn to walk with God and be in his purpose for us.

Application: Are you discerning more fully the unique purpose Jesus has for you? Are you able to say 'yes' to Jesus and 'no' to the expectations of others that can burden you with guilt, regret or second guessing yourself? Can we help you by listening to your story and questions?

And, who needs us to set aside our expectations of them and become a compassionate voice of encouragement rather than a reminder of expectations?

Learn of Jesus: Matthew 11:29

Genuine followers of Jesus are learners/students of the heartbeat and mindset of Jesus that grows into a way of living and loving others. We are invited to observe Jesus...the stories in the Scriptures, and in the lives of countless people who have and who do follow him faithfully, not perfectly, yet progressively.

Application: place yourself in settings where instructive learning can happen and where conversations that include honest questions and struggles can be voiced without the fear of judgment. Ponder Matthew 12:19-21, Philippians 2:5-8. And we are to cultivate the same mindset and heartbeat, guided by God's Spirit and in obedient cooperation with Him. Does your life and my life show tangible evidence that we are genuinely disciples/learners of Jesus? Those closest to us, what would they say?

Find Rest: Matthew 11:29-30

We can experience a deepening peace of mind and poise of spirit as we follow and engage in the purpose of Jesus for our lives, and staying close to his mindset and heartbeat. We can stand tall and move forward, strengthened by God's Spirit and guided by the example of Jesus and his teachings.

"My burden is light"...what Jesus asks of us, of you and me, can be actually lived out. It is 'light' in that sense, it is livable and invigorating. Yes, there are times when we become weary for any number of reasons, yet, we come back to Christ and press the 'reset' button and start fresh. And that breathes life into our weary souls...and we choose to say 'yes' again to One who loves us deeply and is committed to guiding and providing for us, one day, one circumstance at a time.

Application: is this a day to press the 'reset' button? To begin to follow Jesus or to begin again?