

# Rev Kenneth Ferguson

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[ 0 : 00 ] Now with the Lord's help I'd like to focus on the two verses, or the three verses at the end of this chapter we've read together, Matthew chapter 11, and we read from verse 28.

Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

And before we seek to speak on these verses I'd like to bow our heads again in prayer. Let us pray. We praise the O Lord for another opportunity to hear what God the Lord does speak.

And we ask for thy spirits leading of us as we seek to open these words. We ask for the spirit to apply them to our understanding, to our conscience, to our will and to our life.

That it would be profitable for us to have been here this morning, and that the name of our God would be glorified through all that we do.

[ 1 : 37 ] We ask for thy blessing upon all thy people here gathered, we thank thee for them and we pray for thy rich blessing to be upon them and the whole congregation.

We pray for those who aren't able to be in a sanctuary with us here today. We thank thee that they are able to reach them in their homes where they are, or wherever they are, that the Lord is able to visit them and impart a blessing to them.

Remember the minister of the congregation where he is, grant him liberty, the liberty of thy Holy Spirit to bring forth from thy word things old and new, and for the edification of those gathered, and for the praise of thy great name.

Remember all our congregations we ask. In our day when so much worldliness prevails on every hand, when so many people are turning away from the paths of the scripture, we ask, Lord, that thou wouldst come in a day of thy great power to awaken those who are dead in trespasses and sin, and revive and renew thy church.

We thank thee that the power is thine to do these things, and we plead with thee to do great things in our nation of Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom.

[ 3 : 15 ] And bless those in government over us in Edinburgh and in London. We ask for thy leading and guiding for them that they would be willing to be guided by the counsel of the scripture.

We know that David, the psalmist and the king of Israel, reckoned the word of God to be his best counsellor during his time in the world.

And we pray that that may be through of those who govern us, that they would go according to the counsel of God, doing what is God-glorifying and best for our nation.

Remember the nations of the world, particularly these parts where there is war and strife and bloodshed. We ask, O Lord, that thou wouldst intervene and bring a just peace to prevail in these parts of the world.

And those who are enemies of the gospel may be made friends through the saving grace of God. We thank thee that thou hast done this in times past.

[ 4 : 31 ] Those who were enemies of the gospel and persecutors of the church were made to become friends through the saving power of God.

We pray now for thy blessing to be upon us, lead us and guide us in all that we think, and say and do, and forgive our sins. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. For a short while, as the Lord enables us, let us turn to Matthew 11 and verse 28, come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest, and so on.

In this chapter 11 and the previous chapter, chapter 10, we see the Lord Jesus sending forth his disciples to preach.

And as he sends them forth, he makes clear to them that the work to which he is calling them is not going to be any easy work.

[ 5 : 35 ] For example, in chapter 10 and verse 16, we find a reference there to the hostility that they can expect from the people to whom the Lord is sending them.

Behold, Jesus says, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

What a picture he draws for them, he sends them into that kind of arena where people just are intent upon destroying the disciples of Christ.

And then of course, in chapter 11 and verse 16, we have the same kind of thing. To what shall I compare this generation, Jesus says, it is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates.

We played the flute to you, you did not dance. We sang a dirge and you did not mourn. There he is saying that not only are the people to whom he is sending them hostile, but they are also totally unresponsive to the gospel message that they bring.

[ 6 : 49 ] It's as if they want anything and everything apart from what the Lord Jesus Christ is willing to send them. John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, he has a demon, we have no place for him.

And the son of man came eating and drinking and they say, look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. It's as if they're saying, we don't want anything to do with John the Baptist or Jesus of Nazareth because they don't fit into the world view and the picture we have of how people ought to be and how they ought to live.

And that's the way it is still. And then of course in chapter 11 again and in verse 21, we find that the cities of Corazin and Bethsaida had witnessed and heard wonderful things through the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But he said, they didn't listen. Woe unto you, he said. The mighty works done in you, if they had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented and if the works had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

It's as if Jesus is saying, this is the kind of opposition that you can expect. You're going out there with a message and the wind is blowing in your face relentlessly, unforgiving opposition from the world.

[ 8 : 20 ] And then coming to verse 25, it's as if there's a break in the chapter and the Lord Jesus declares there, Father I thank you, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the understanding and revealed them to little children.

The wise and the understanding, I take it to mean people who are wise in their own estimation and like the Pharisees were, looking down on others who didn't come up to the standard of lifestyle that they sought to live by themselves.

It's as if these people, they were shutting out the Lord's provision for themselves saying, we don't need it and the Lord in His infinite wisdom and in His sovereign purpose has closed the door upon them.

The Lord of heaven and earth has hidden these things from those who are wise in their own estimation and in their own understanding, but the Lord has revealed the gospel blessings and wonderful privileges to those who are like little children who don't profess to be better than others but who are merely sinners living in this world, looking for a saviour, looking for a solution to the problem of sin in their own lives.

And that's what I want to focus on particularly in verse 28 onwards. And first of all, under three headings I'd like to say this first of all, the Lord Jesus sends an urgent invitation to that particular group of people who are heavy laden and who are labouring.

[ 10 : 21 ] The same people I believe as is named in verse 25 as the little children, these people who are as it were, outcasts from the tight circles of the Pharisees and the scribes and the lawyers who think that wisdom is with them and there is no wisdom with anybody else, but the Lord has come to those who are aware of their own need.

And that's the first thing I want to highlight, an urgent invitation to them. Secondly He gives a gracious promise, come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

The world may promise us rest, may promise us riches and many other things, but the Lord alone can fulfil the promise that He makes here.

He will give real rest and I'd like to focus for a minute on what that might mean. Finally and finally He gives Christian priorities, take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

I am gentle and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy, my burden is light. These two things take my yoke and learn from me.

[ 11 : 50 ] When He comes to Christ He wants us to stay with Him under His yoke, walking the road with Him and learning from Him day by day as we journey on.

These three things, first of all an urgent invitation, secondly a gracious promise and thirdly Christian priorities.

First an urgent invitation, come to me, He says, it's as if Jesus makes them aware that they are surrounded by all this hostility in the world, an unresponsive world, an unrepentant world and He says I am here and all power has been given to me.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father, no one knows the Son except the Father, no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

I have the answer, I am the gate through which you must come if you want eternal life, if you want relief and release from all the difficulties and trials but wear you down and He says come to me all you who labour.

[ 13 : 16 ] Now I mentioned a couple of times the Pharisees and the Pharisees they were very legalistic as we all know from the scripture account of them and they put burdens on the people with any number of little laws that they added to the ten commandments, do this and don't do that, go there and don't go there, touch that and don't touch that, all of these minute laws they were weighing down the people and the people just couldn't bear the weight of all these extra commandments and laws and regulations that the Pharisees laid upon them, so much so that the people were burdened and fatigued and labouring under this heavy judicial legalistic regime of the Pharisees.

Well maybe you're not aware of that kind of burden in your own life but maybe you're aware of something else that burdens you, maybe you're burdened by the cares of this world, family concerns, health concerns, employment concerns, concerns in relation to other aspects of your life socially and things are weighing you down and you just don't seem to be able to make any progress as it were in a satisfying and pleasing lifestyle, you're weighed down and you can't shake your burdens off and the Lord Jesus says, I am able to answer all your questions, give solutions to all your problems, where do these burdens and problems stem from? Well of course we're living in an imperfect world, a world where sin has taken such deep root and we ourselves are sinners in the presence of God by nature and practice, we have come into this world as sinners in need of salvation and when we become aware of our sinfulness and of our accountability to God, when we come aware of our guilt before God as sinners, we realise that it's an awful burden to carry and we cannot carry it on our own, there is a way that the Lord has presented to us through which this burden of sin that we are carrying and that weighs us down can be dealt with and the weighs in himself come to me. Isn't it wonderful that Jesus in the Gospel of John, he says seven times, I am something or other,

I am the bread of life, he says, I am the light of the world, I am the door into fellowship with the Father, I am the good shepherd, I am the resurrection and the life, I am the way, the truth and the life, I am the true vine, I am all that you need, if you need light, he is the light, if you need life, he is the life, if you need access into the presence of God by faith, he is the door through whom you come, if you need leading and guiding through this difficult and dangerous wilderness, he is the good shepherd and David said the Lord is my shepherd, I shall need for nothing, if you need encouragement in the face of death, he says I am the resurrection and the life, if you want to find your way and know which way to go in this world, he says I am the way, I am the truth and the life, no man comes unto the Father but by me.

And maybe you hear this morning burdened with various aspects of sin, sins of thought that you just can't shake off, sins that you thought you had dealt with years ago and they seem to emerge with new clothing and with extra power in your life, maybe you are aware of a wayward streak appearing in your life that you weren't aware of before and all that proves to you, what the scripture says that we are all in need of cleansing and forgiveness, we are all in need of the touch of the great healer, the Lord Jesus Christ and he says come to me and in the original this is an imperative case that needs to be dealt with immediately, it's an urgent word from the Lord but it's extended as an urgent invitation, don't hang about, come to me, he says don't look anywhere else, I have the answer.

And then he says come to me, what does it really mean to come to him? Well some people start coming to church and that's commendable in itself but that's not the same as coming to Jesus Christ in the way that this scripture requires of us, some people start reading their Bible and that's also commendable in itself but it's not the same as coming to Jesus Christ in this way, some people start praying and that is commendable in itself also but we must come to Christ in a particular way according to what the scripture here asks of us, what does it mean when Jesus says come to me? [ 19 : 54 ] Well of course Jesus Christ is in heaven, we can't come to him physically or bodily, he nevertheless requires it of us, come to me.

Well of course he presents himself to us in the scripture and he wants us to yield to him as he reveals himself to us as the sinner, savior in the scripture.

We need to come and trust in this Jesus of the Bible, that is what coming to him really means, believing about him yes that's one thing but trusting in him that is the real coming to him of which the Bible here speaks.

By nature we trust in ourselves, in our own abilities, in our own strength or we trust something or someone else but Jesus says if you really come to me you must cast yourself as a sinner unclean and undeserving of any mercy or of any good thing come and cast yourself upon the bosom of my mercy.

It's as if he is standing with his arms wide open and he says to those who are little children who are lacking in knowledge, lacking in righteousness, lacking in the really important things of life as a true knowledge of God and he says come to me and I will give you rest, those who are unclean through sin come to me and I will give you rest.

[ 21 : 54 ] Listen the wonderful account we have of the prodigal son always engaging in this respect. When you think of the prodigal son who went away to the foreign land carrying in his pocket his share of his father his state and as you all know he misspent all his money and he fell on hard times.

Adam and came into the country and somebody sent him into the fields to feed swine. I know somebody who had experience as a young lad, as a student working with pigs and he says when you mingle with them and feed them and touch them and so on there's this awful smell that seems to linger with him.

A kind of an uncleanness and when you think of the prodigal son he said I will arise out of this mess into which I have brought myself and I will go back to my father and he arose and went and the Bible says that when he was still a far way off his father saw him and his father ran to meet him and he repeatedly kissed him.

Now the picture I have is this young man is filthy from head to toe. Nevertheless his father didn't refrain from embracing him and kissing him repeatedly because that's the way the scripture says in the original.

He embraced him and kissed him because he had come back home and that's the way Jesus is here. Come to me however impure, however much a failure, however much of a mess you've made of things, however sinful, however guilty you feel, come because Jesus calls you and he is willing to give you salvation.

[ 24 : 11 ] Just like the father gave the prodigal he said take out the best robe and put it on him, kill the fatted calf, let his eat and be merry.

This my son was lost and has fallen again. Come on to me.

But then the second point I'd like to highlight is that there's a gracious promise. Jesus doesn't leave things as it were open ended and say just come to me all who labour and are heavy laden.

But the promise then that the second part of verse 28 is I will give you rest.

Can you read in the shorter catechism about the blessings that accompany the new birth, the blessings that accompany a flow from justification, adoption and sanctification.

[ 25 : 30 ] These are blessings that the Lord gives in the new birth. When somebody comes to Jesus Christ, when somebody is born again, what blessings accompany or flow from these?

Well the first one is this, an assurance of God's love. It says here I will give you rest and when you truly come you will know that he loves you.

An assurance of God's love. It's not a grudging kind of half invitation he's giving you. He's giving you a wholehearted genuine invitation to come and when you come in truth you will be assured that he does love you.

He will embrace you. What does this mean? Well you will feel and know in your own spirit, received by him.

He will know his fatherly love, his brotherly love. You will know his fellowship, you will know something of the peace that comes when he has addressed the gift of your conscience.

[ 26 : 53 ] He will give you peace in your conscience so that it's no longer accusing you and seeking to destroy you.

You will know something of the joy of the Holy Ghost. Joy in the Holy Ghost. Joy that the world cannot in any sense give you.

Jesus says to the disciples my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you that not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

And we see the same kind of thing here with the joy that comes. It's a heavenly joy. It's a pure joy. It's not carnal or worldly or in any way corrupt.

The joy of the world so often is corrupt and carnal and sinful. But the joy and the peace and the rest that Jesus gives is a heavenly joy and a heavenly peace and we rejoice in the Lord in our hearts.

[ 28 : 07 ] You all I'm sure have heard of what Augustine of old said as he was addressing the Lord, Lord, you have made us for yourself and our souls will not be at rest until they rest in thee and that's true because Jesus himself says it, I will give you rest.

The world cannot, you cannot manufacture a rest or a peace for yourself that is permanent but this piece is permanent.

In fact the peace that Jesus gives you through the grace of the gospel, it is the beginning of an eternal peace.

The peace in grace is the beginning of the peace that culminates in glory. Where they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, the sun shall not light on them nor any heat.

The lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and lead them into living fountains of waters and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. That's the ultimate peace but it begins here when you come to Jesus by faith, when you come and receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone as he is freely offered in the gospel.

[ 29 : 43 ] Have you yet come, if not why not? The world cannot compete and the blessings of the gospel are so far above the things that are best in this world.

Come to Jesus, he has power to bestow eternal life upon you. But the third point, the Christian priorities that the Lord lays before us, having come to him in the way that I've tried to describe, he then says in verse 29, take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

As I mentioned already, once we come to him, we stay with him. We know that the yoke is the piece of wood that goes on the back of the neck of the animals, the oxen usually that they used to have for plowing or drawing carts or whatever with heavy loads.

And the two animals there worked together. They were close together and were engaged in the same work together.

And Jesus uses that picture and he says, take my yoke upon you. You've been long enough under the yoke of sin, doing the business of sin and the business of this world, the business of your own self-righteous outlook, doing what pleases you.

[ 31 : 24 ] You've been doing that long enough and in a day of his grace he breaks that yoke and he gives you now a new one.

And he says, it's my yoke. I'm under it and you're going to be beside me. You need to walk in the same firm, plow in the same field, walk on the same road, be engaged in the same business, have the mind of Christ, do the business of Christ.

Live for me, not unto yourself, not unto the world. This is what he is saying and it's a Christian's priority to live not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again.

Take my yoke upon you. One of the commentators says about the yoke that we really need to be under the yoke of Christ because there is still a remnant of corruption remaining within us.

Although we have come to Christ and received forgiveness of sin, nevertheless we are not perfect and we need to be taught how to live and how to live to the glory of God.

[ 32 : 50 ] And this man says, we have to be guided in the right way. We have to be corrected. We have to be chastised and we have to engage in holy duties in the strength of the Lord and according to the direction of the Lord.

We need to be sanctified. We need to be given strength to go on to do what pleases him and not just what pleases ourselves.

But besides taking the yoke upon us, he says, learn from me. Learn to listen to my voice.

Listen to the way I am directing you. Do this. Don't go there. And what does it say? I am gentle and lowly in heart.

We have to learn from the way he lived his life. Think of the number of times the Lord Jesus has brought before us as the servant in the gospels.

[ 34 : 05 ] And he came to serve and to fulfil God's purpose. Think of the number of times that he was given abusive treatment by his enemies.

Think particularly of the time he had been arrested and he was ready, he was going to be crucified shortly after. The way the soldiers manhandled him and abused him and struck him, but he didn't utter one word.

Because he was doing the father's business. He was fulfilling what the Lord God commanded him to do.

Think of the time when he was in Gethsemane, when he was praying and his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground and he saw the cup he had to drink and his human nature recoiled from that cup.

Nevertheless he says, if it's not going to pass from me, you will be done. Not my will, but you will be done. In the most difficult and trying circumstances he walked in the path of obedience.

[ 35 : 24 ] He loved his people and he didn't shrink from the cost of saving them. And the cost of saving his people was that he would go to the cross and be crucified in their room and in their stead.

All of these things I think feed into what he says here. Take my yoke upon you. Learn from me.

Learn from me. I am gentle and lowly in heart and then you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

My yoke is easy in comparison to the yoke of sin and the yoke of worldliness that you've been laboring under up until now, he says.

Take my yoke. It's a better yoke. I know that things might be difficult, but it's a better yoke at the end of the day. One of the commentators, John Trape was a Puritan, he says of the yoke being easy.

[ 36 : 40 ] He says, liken it to the wings of a bird or the sails of a ship. They have weight in themselves, but they enable the bird to fly high or the ship to sail on over the sea.

And so it is with the yoke of Christ. It's as if it carries you heavenward and it sails you to the heavenly shore.

Take my yoke upon you. Learn of me. My yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Just these three things. The urgent invitation. Come to me. The gracious promise. Jesus says, I will give you rest and have this priority as a Christian in your life.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For he says, I am gentle and lowly and hot and you will find rest for your souls.

[ 37 : 52 ] Amen. May God bless these words too. She says it is free.