

THE SECRET OF JOYFUL SERVICE
Matthew 11:25-30

Intro: The burden of the Lord's work is something that can lie very heavily upon the hearts of His people. There is a lot of stress and strain in His work. We are continually faced with either the hostility or indifference of the world. Sometimes the stress and strain comes because we do not see the fruit that we would like to see. In fact, at times it seems that our labor is fruitless.

We also are continually aware of the fact that we do not have what it takes to do what the Lord has apparently appointed for us to do. "Burnout" has become a popular word to describe what often happens to pastors and missionaries. Many men, evangelical men, who once were in the ministry, have dropped out. And there are many in our churches who feel so inadequate or who have become so frustrated in the Lord's work, that they no longer are doing anything.

Matthew, chapter 11, begins with an account of the disillusionment of John the Baptist in prison. He was so confused that he was not only wondering about the work of the Lord, but he was even wondering about the Lord! See v. 3.

The verses of chapter 11 from 7 on down to our text give much reason to wonder what the work of the Lord really was.

When we get down to verse 25 there is no doubt but that the Lord has His own disciples in mind when He prayed, and when He said what He did after He had prayed. But be sure to notice in verses 25-27 that the Lord's work was exactly as the Father had intended that it should be. Much of the strain, therefore, that His disciples felt had to be due to the fact that they did not understand the sovereignty of God. And this would apply to John the Baptist also.

But the Lord knew what the answer was for His own people, and this is what we want to consider tonight.

If you think back to the time when the Lord first began to call His disciples to the work of the Lord, this is what the Lord had said,

Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men
(Matt. 4:19).

The word translated "Follow" in that verse is the same word which the Lord used in chapter 11, verse 28, when He said, "Come." And this is but the first of three commandments which the Lord issued here, none of them new, but commandments which they apparently had forgotten, and were no longer obeying. Let us look at the three commandments, and then notice the promise which followed.

I. "COME UNTO ME."

In the latter part of John we learn of disciples who turned and walked no more with the Lord Jesus. Cf. John 6:66. That was the worst thing that they could have done. But they obviously did not like His teaching.

It is amazing what some people will do when the work of the Lord gets to be something that they cannot handle. Some out a sheer sense of duty will plod ahead, but there is no joy in what they do, and the load gets heavier and heavier.

A common thing that is being done today is to turn to humanistic psychology, or man's ideas of how to run things, but the Lord made it perfectly clear what His people should do, and what they should have been doing all along: "Come unto me . . ." Their initial call had been to come to Him, to follow Him, not as an occasional thing, but as a daily habit, a way of life!

Our life is a service unto the Lord, and is often perplexing, but that is when we need to realize that our coming to the Lord is the only answer.

When we are maintaining our fellowship with the Lord, we will be coming to Him, seeking Him, praying to Him. The beginning of our difficulties in our daily lives is when we cease coming to the Lord.

Have you noticed anything strange about the verses we have been memorizing on Sunday morning--Rom. 11:33-36? Paul did not understand all of the ways of the Lord, but instead of it being a disillusionment to him, it was a subject for praise and worship. It is in meeting with the Lord that we take the first step in solving our difficulties. So many of us are so busy with living for and serving the Lord that we do not really have time for HIM! And that is our problem!

But note the second command.

II. "TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU."

A yoke is a bar or a frame of wood which ties two draft animals together at the neck so that they may work together, pulling a plow, or possibly a wagon.

Here is a most precious thought as we think of the Lord's work. Sometimes we have fellowworkers which share the load with us, but this is something that is even better than that. Here the Lord was calling His weary disciples to get

under His yoke with Him!

This calls for submission to the Lord. And it means that we are to realize that He has not called us to serve by ourselves, but the work is His, and His power is really what means the difference between our failure as compared with success.

Oh, how important it is for us to maintain a constant attitude of submission to the Lord, and to remember that He never leaves us to serve alone!

But there is yet another word.

III. "AND LEARN OF ME."

We come to the Lord; we submit ourselves to do His will, His work. But what then?

Do you notice that so far the Lord has said nothing about the work as such? Instead He spoke of learning something, learning of HIM!

Do you know that it is possible to learn a lot of things about the work of the Lord, without really learning about the Lord, learning of Him?

We study how to do this, and how to do that--how to prepare sermons, how to deliver them, how to study the Bible, how to win people to Christ, and what would seem like hundreds of other how to's. But it is amazing to see how much we can learn about those things and talk about those things without talking about the Lord. He said, "Learn of ME!"

"Well," you might say, "I know who the Lord is. I know about His pre-existence, His incarnation, His perfect life, His miracles, His messages, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His coming again. I know a lot about prophecy. What else is there to know, except to learn all of this better?"

Let us let the Lord give us His answer.

He said, "And learn of me,
for I am meek and lowly in heart."

Now to learn these things about the Lord means that we not only learn these things about Him, but we learn that we need to be like the Lord in these two respects. There are plenty of people who would like to speak to the crowds which listened to the Lord, or they would like to perform miracles like the Lord did, or they want to claim His sinlessness,

but this is not what the Lord said. He said that they were to learn His meekness and His lowliness.

What do they mean, and what changes will they make in us?

A. "Meek."

This describes a gentle person who endures all things with an attitude of dependence upon God, satisfied that the Lord's work is the way that it is, and not wishing to change it.

Moses was like the Lord in this. Cf. Num. 12:3. Aaron and Miriam wanted his place; he was satisfied with the work of the Lord that way it was. He was content to let the Lord run things.

Link this with verses 25-27 in our text. That is meekness.

B. "Lowly in heart."

For it to be "in heart" meant that this lowliness was inward, genuine, and real. It was not a pretended thing.

This speaks of something that is very rare among the Lord's people today. We know very little about humility, and this is one reason for the turmoil that we have in our hearts. The Lord's servants can be very ambitious, very anxious to have name-familiarity.

You see, if we understand the incarnation of Christ, if we understand His earthly life and ministry, if we understand His death as we should, these are going to be the truths that will concern our interest. No one was more satisfied with the will of God, and no one ever lowered Himself as much, as our Lord Jesus Christ.

As long as you and I live, and as often as we get apart to read our Bibles and to seek the Lord, we must never lose sight of these two things which were characteristic of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why? Note . . .

IV. THE PROMISE.

It is stated twice:

- 1) In v. 28, " . . . and I will give you rest."
- 2) In v. 29, " . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

You see, this is not rest FROM our labor (that will come when we die, or when the Lord comes), but this is rest IN our labor!

As someone has expressed it, "We may get weary in the work, but we will not get weary of the work!"

This is one of the reasons for the Lord's Supper, to bring us back to the Lord, to center our thoughts on Him, to remind us that we need Him every day, and that He is the only indispensable One!

Have you forgotten this? Does the work of the Lord cause you distress instead of peace and joy, or to use the Lord's word, rest?

Concl: Let me conclude by giving you a perfect example from the Scriptures of the very thing that the Lord was speaking about here.

Please turn to the familiar story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42.

Let us not be critical of Martha because she was doing what she was doing. That was very necessary and pleasing to the Lord. But the sad thing was that she was doing it with great turmoil in her heart because Mary was not helping her. If she had been sitting at the Lord's feet, learning how meek and lowly He was, she, too, would have found rest for her soul, and the greatest of joy in serving a meal for the Lord Jesus.

Oh, may the Lord keep this before us daily! Never neglect to meet with the Lord in Bible reading and prayer. But always be sure that you are there to learn of Him so that you can be like Him and know that rest that He had throughout the most difficult circumstances of His very difficult life.