

“The Easy Yoke” (Ruthless Elimination of Hurry Pt. 2)
(Matthew 11:28-30)

• **The Great Invitation**

- If you’ve spent time in the Church and you know some about the Bible, you’ve probably heard of “the Great Commission.” What did Jesus say? **The Great Commission: Go Make Disciples (Matt. 28:18-20)**. What about “the Great Commandment”? **The Great Commandment: Love God, Love Others (Matt. 22:37-40)**. But did you know there’s another “Great” that comes before those? It’s called *the Great Invitation*. What did Jesus say here? **The Great Invitation: Come to Me (Matt. 11:28-30)**. Before the commission, before the commandment, Jesus says, *come to me*. I don’t know about you, but those are words I constantly need to hear—and it just makes me love Jesus all the more. Do you feel your soul *rising* to that invitation this morning, do you hear Him speaking *to you*? Let’s pray, then read the full invitation.
 - Our Lord says, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30)**.
- What is your burden? And where are you taking it? When we take our burdens someplace other than the infinite God, we eventually end up with *exhaustion* or *addiction*. We end up with this hurried, weary, compulsive way of life that is the “yoke” of the modern world. Life has a weight to it, no matter who you are. I think we all feel it, especially in this cultural moment. The temptation is to seek *relief* by reaching out for anything in front of us that could temporarily distract, escape, numb, comfort, satisfy the ache: the ache of past wounds, the ache of fear, stress, anxiety, hurry, the ache of unmet longings, the ache of grief, guilt, shame, the ache of existential angst and meaninglessness, the ache of survival—the ache of the burdens of life.
 - So we end up with all these compulsive, even *addictive* relationships to stuff—food, coffee, alcohol, substances, sex, gambling, entertainment, technology, sports, videogames, exercise, achievement. Instead of just receiving and celebrating God’s good gifts in God’s good way, it becomes: *I need this to feel better, I need this to feel something, I need this to survive, and I’ll get it at any cost, no matter the consequence to myself or others*. Historian David Courtright calls this *the Age of Addiction*; he came up with the phrase **“limbic capitalism,”** which refers to the, **“technologically advanced business systems that encourage excessive consumption and addiction,”** the deliberate design of products that cause us to become addicted to the feelings we get when we “use” them. You know, **“America runs on...DOPAMINE!”** Our souls are *looking for relief*—and this world ensnares us to a yoke of slavery—only to *make the weight heavier*. And *the heavier it gets, the more we crave relief, the more the cycle continues*. You get it?

• **The Easy Yoke**

- Into this fallen world, Jesus says: *Come to me. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*. What’s that mean, how does it work?
- Let’s break it down: **Who is Jesus speaking to?** Jesus is addressing all those who are weary and burdened. In this context, He was addressing fellow Israelites who were *“burned out on religion”* as the Message translation puts it—the legalistic way of keeping the Law of Moses, taught by the scribes and Pharisees, who often clashed with Jesus. Jesus is saying, *you’re wearing yourself out trying to keep God’s Law on your own strength; follow my Way*. More broadly, Jesus is speaking to the human condition, weighed down by the burden of sin and the weariness of life in this fallen world—*that’s all of us!*
- **What does Jesus promise?** *Come to me...and I will give you rest...you will find rest for your souls*. Rest from the futility of survival in a fallen world. Rest from our own striving efforts to make life work apart from God. Rest from our sin, which enslaves us and abuses us like a tyrant. Rest from a world captive to sin and death. In short, *salvation*.
- **How do we enjoy the promise?** What’s Jesus answer to all of this, so we can find His rest? He says, *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart...my yoke*

is easy and my burden is light. We need to unpack some imagery here: what is a yoke? (Hint: we're not talking about eggs!) Jesus was originally speaking to an *agrarian culture*. (Pic) A "yoke" is a piece of equipment that allows beasts of burden to work together—oxen, cows, horses, etc. uniting for a common task, like pulling a plow or a cart. It was often a custom-carved wooden beam, with adjustable braces, made to comfortably suit the animals wearing it—so there wouldn't be chaffing or bruising, and the burden could be easily shared. **This word "yoke" literally means, a coupling, uniting, joining two together to work as one.** Jesus says, *take my yoke.*

- Are you getting the image now? The Great Invitation is *incredibly powerful* and *absolutely life-altering* when you grasp *who's saying it* and *what He's saying!* This is the King of the Universe, the Messiah, the Word-made-flesh in whom all things were made, the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Redeemer who died and rose and reigns: He is saying to you and me, *I want to do life with you. I want you to stop trying to carry the burden of living and following God on your own, with whatever equipment the world gives you. Instead, come to me, come up under my yoke and do it with Me.* Shoulder to shoulder. He became like us for this purpose! We're talking about the only One who ever walked out of His grave on His own power. So, you can be sure that when He says it, *He really means it!* But you've got to *accept the invitation* to enjoy the results: you've got to *come to Jesus, learn from Jesus, and do it His way.* Every other yoke *is a yoke of slavery*, even if it's well-meaning attempts to please God on your own strength and merit. It's only in the *yoke of Jesus* that we find rest, freedom, salvation.
- **The Weight that Gives You wings**
 - Admittedly, there is irony in this invitation: I mean, we come to Jesus looking for *rest*, and He offers us, *a work instrument?* But Jesus knows the most restful thing He can give us is not merely *an escape*, but *a new way of life with Him.*
 - Dallas Willard described it this way: *"Jesus is saying, 'get involved in my work with me.' It's a whole-life process of doing and saying what He does...It isn't just for church...you bring your whole life into the flow of what God is doing. Think about what you spend your time doing every day—what you did today, what you're doing tomorrow—you do that in the yoke. As you do it, you look to Him, and you seek and trust that He will act with you...What happens is, we begin to rest in the strength of Christ which we're walking in."*
 - Augustine of Hippo said: ***"Any other burden oppresses and crushes you, but Christ's actually takes weight off you. Any other burden weighs you down, but Christ's gives you wings. If you take a bird's wings away, you might seem to be taking weight off it. But the more weight you take off, the more you tie it down to the earth...Give it back the weight of its wings, and you will see how it flies."*** This is how the easy yoke and light burden of Jesus works: in giving us the weight of His Way, walking with Him, *He gives us wings to soar.*
 - This is a whole way of life, that affects every part of life. This is *doing life with Jesus as our Savior, Lord, and Teacher.* This is adjusting the habits and practices of daily life according to His Teaching, so we can live in ever-growing communion with God.
 - In the end there are two options: the Yoke of Slavery, or the Yoke of Jesus. Last week, we talked about the choice between "the bread of anxious toil" and "the Bread of Life." This week, it's the choice between *the yokes*. There is only *One Yoke of Jesus*—but the Yoke of Slavery takes many forms. Think about your life, as we get ready to go back out into the world:
 - ***Which yoke are you living in? The yoke of slavery, or the yoke of Jesus? Which one do you want to live in?*** What does your "yoke of slavery" look like? Is it slavery to your own attempts at righteousness, trying to follow God's Laws on your own strength? Is it slavery to your desires for comfort, relief, satisfaction, that lead to sinful compulsions and destructive habits? Is it slavery to the opinions of others, to success? What is the *shape* of your yoke of slavery?
 - What would it look like for you to accept Jesus' invitation today, *to come to Him*, and say, *Lord, show me how to do life your way? Where do I need to make adjustments in my daily walk to be more in step with you? What's the Way of life you're wanting to free me into this week?*
 - For the next 3 weeks, we're going to be looking at specific practices, spiritual disciplines, that help us live in the Yoke of Jesus, eliminating hurry. But today, just sit with those questions:

What's my yoke of slavery? Am I living in that yoke, or Jesus' yoke? And what's His invitation to me this week to do life more in His Way? Let's pray.