

**Bumper** – Howell Tucker Testimony

God is doing **great things** in the lives of people in our church – and I believe He wants to do even **greater things**.

This AM, we're starting a series entitled, **Greater Things** – focusing on the (4) greatest teaching of Christ. In this series, I want to challenge us to join together for Greater Things. I'm convinced that if we'll apprehend and live out these (4) teachings, God will allow us to experience individually and together **Greater Things** for His glory. These teachings involve – **knowing** God, **loving** God, **following** God, and **serving** God. Let's begin today by looking at **Mt. 11:25f** – and a message entitled – *The Great Provide*.

*Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, b/c you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary, 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

The Continental Divide of the Americas (or Great Divide) is the principal hydrological divide in the Western Hemisphere. Extending from the Bering Strait in Alaska to the Strait of Magellan at the southernmost tip of Chile, it separates the watershed that drains to either the Pacific or Atlantic Ocean. Amazingly, two drops of rain can fall w/in an inch of either other and yet end up on different sides of the continent.

Yet while the *Great Divide* might be the most prominent ecological divide in the world – it's not the most pervasive. There's a divide more delicate and more treacherous – a great divide separating every person from the Creator – the **divide of sin**. Sin is the great separator. And b/c of the wages of sin, God demonstrated His love for me and you in that while we're sinners – Christ died for us. And now, b/c of the cross, God has provided a bridge over the great divide of sin to rescue anyone who'll believe and receive His grace. Yet sadly, the faith of one man to another can fall w/in inches of each other and wind up missing God's grace and forgiveness as far as the east is from the west.

These words in **Mt. 11** are arguably the most beautiful invitation ever extended to mankind. It's fair to say there's never been a greater plea to the human heart than God's extension of grace to a desperate soul in their time of need. We find in these words (3) simple verbs God offers to bring us peace and rest – (3) imperatives essential to discovering grace and forgiveness – **COME, TAKE, and LEARN**.

**Re-read** – *Come to me, all you who are weary, 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

This is a greatly misunderstood text. It's not about our burdens but His grace – it's a simple spiritual equation.

**COME + TAKE + LEARN = REST**

I An Invitation to **COME**

*Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden,*

As we look at what it means to *come* – let's first address the audience w/ whom Jesus is speaking. The crowd around him was filled *seekers*, *skeptics* and *scoffers*. And they had (2) things in common – they were weary and heavy laden.

**weary** (*kopiao*) refers to a person who's worked themselves to the point of exhaustion. They've labored tirelessly; and sadly, they've expended their energy on the wrong things.

Jesus was talking to those people exhausted in trying to keep the 613 rules in the Law. And what's worse, He tells them that all their effort was for naught b/c the Law was incapable of getting them to heaven – for the Law wasn't given to save but to reveal sin and point people to the Savior.

I pride myself on finding short cuts and alternate routes to avoid traffic. There's just (1) thing more frustrating to me than sitting in traffic – getting out of traffic to find a short cut only to find a dead-end that falls short of my objective. All that time and energy used to find a way to my destination down the tubes b/c it is impossible to reach the destination.

This is what's intended in the word weary – exhausted in the attempt to find a way to God through human effort only to find out that even if you could – **it wouldn't be enough.**

Jesus calls to Himself everyone who is exhausted from trying to find and please God in his own resources. He invites the person who is wearied from his vain search for truth through human wisdom, who is exhausted from trying to earn salvation, and who has despaired of achieving God's standard of righteousness by his own efforts. *MacArther*

heavy-laden – *perf. pass.* – meaning at some point in the journey of life, these people were dumped on and run over by life. The demands, stresses, and circumstances of life have overwhelmed them to the point of despair.

**Jesus point is simple** – whether you're *internally* exhausted in your attempt to please God through human effort that falls short or overrun by the *external* things in life so that you've given up hope – **you're now right where you need to be** – absolutely destitute, poor in spirit, broken – desperate!

Jesus is extending His grace to (3) types of people:

- People weary from their human search for God
- People dissatisfied by an oppressive religious experience
- People burdened by the crushing weight of sin and guilt

In other words – **Jesus is extending His grace to everyone, everywhere**, no matter who they are; and no matter what they've done or not done. He says, *Come... I'll give you rest.*

**come** (*duete*) imperative – a call to make a personal faith decision that results in an action of believing/receiving. **Textually** – *come* means to leave godlessness, aimlessness, and sinfulness to enter into a relationship w/ Christ. It's an **invitation to exchange** your burdens, brokenness, and condemnation for His love, peace, and life. **Not a bad deal!**

It means that salvation is not a creed to recite, a church to attend, a ritual to repeat, or a pastor or priest to follow – *come* is a simple active, faith response to Jesus.

So if you're tired of all the religious games that lead to nowhere... if your fed up w/ trying to do it on your own, or if you're tired of living under the weight and guilt of sin – then why not turn to Jesus and **COME!**

But Jesus didn't stop w/ just an invitation to **COME** – he also expects us to **TAKE...**

## II An Expectation to TAKE

*Take my yoke upon you...*

take (*airo*) to lift up. It's a **word of exchange**. By faith, we're to give up the flawed, exhausting yoke of human effort and the Law that falls short to *take as our own* the sufficient and life-changing yoke of Christ. Jesus is saying, "*Give up your way for my way b/c my way is the only one that works.*"

To grasp this phrase requires an understanding of – *yoke*.

We typically think of a *yoke* as a hand-hewn block of wood placed over the neck and shoulders of an animal pulling a cart that affords the driver control over the animal. **But this is NOT what Jesus was referring to in this passage.**

In the ancient world – a yoke was a metaphor for *submission* – symbolizing obedience to one's master. More specifically, a Rabbi's yoke was his interpretation of the **613 rules** in the Torah, Talmud, Mishnah he expected his disciples to obey.

**In Jesus' invitation** – he offers an exchange of yokes. He's saying – instead of trying to follow the 613 rules of the Law that were never intended to save but given primarily to reveal to people that we're sinners in need of a Savior – **take my yoke** and allow me to be your Savior. For where the yoke of the Law falls short – My yoke of grace will be sufficient.

And what is His yoke? He summed it up in (2) commands – *love God* and *love your neighbor*. Put your faith and trust in Christ alone and then watch it become real as evidence by how you treat others in the same way Jesus has treated you.

So **COME. TAKE.** And one more thing – **LEARN...**

### III An Anticipation to LEARN

*...and learn from me...*

learn (*manthano*) Jesus says – let me teach you...

Insisting that we have something important to learn from Him that we cannot, and will not, learn from anyone else.

Yet it is surprising how many people seem to come to Christ and never learn anything from Him. They want something from Him, and might even want to give Him something, but they apparently have come to Him for some other purpose than to learn. We learn here that Jesus' stated purpose in bringing men unto Himself is that they may take His yoke and learn of Him. It is more than salvation – it is life!

Yet I'm not so certain we've understood the objective of Christ's invitation as He intended. And I'm fairly certain we've not taken it as seriously as required of it. I'm not so sure we've grasped the reality of His calling.

We've viewed His invite as a mechanism to save us from hell (and it does); but His grace isn't primarily about what we were saved from but what we've been saved into – an intimate, personal relationship w/ the Creator and Savior in which He wants us to become just like Him. He wants us to learn from Him how to be Jesus to the world around us.

Jesus wants you to be a student in His school. There's a great *textbook* for you to study, a great *theme* to master, a great *teacher* to learn from, and a great *thrill* to experience. The textbook is the Bible. The theme is the person of Christ. The teacher is the H.S. and the thrill is to experience and express the real purpose of this learning. Herb Hodges

What are we to learn? We're to learn more than some form of religious information that leads to intellectual illumination – **we're to learn how to live and experience life w/ Christ.** We're to learn more than the *what* – we're to learn the *why* and the *how* – and how to *be* w/ God.

**This is a call to followship.** Jesus is saying there's more to this thing called Christianity than salvation – there's life w/ God and it requires you intentionally submit and follow the lead of the Master w/ a heart abandoned to His heart and a will submitted to His Word and way. **Come learn from Me!**

**Anything less is to come halfway.** We're not called just to **COME** and **TAKE**, we're also called to **LEARN** (follow).



In the early church, many Jewish people were attracted to Christ and outwardly would identify themselves w/ the church. But for fear of not being accepted in culture or in the synagogue, they'd often w/draw from Christ b/c in actuality they only went part way w/ Christ so long as it was convenient or beneficial – but drew the line at sacrificial.

*Many of His followers w/drew, and were not walking w/ Him anymore.* John 6:66

To intellectually acknowledge Christ as God and engage in religious activity does NOT make for a true Christ-follower who has found God's rest. God's rest comes to the person who has abandoned himself to God – he has no option but to **COME – TAKE – and LEARN** by coming to Christ alone, taking by faith His way of grace, and learning from Him by denying self and following Jesus.

And should we **COME, TAKE** and **LEARN** it will lead to **REST**. It results in finding peace w/ God and in God.

#### IV A Proposition to REST

*...and you will find rest for your souls.*

rest (*anapauo*) to refresh or revive – to bring to life.

Throughout the Bible, *rest* is a common theme most often referring to a destination or position w/ God – a place where a person experiences God’s presence, power, and promise. It is a descriptive term to describe salvation and peace w/ God.

This is God’s *great provide* that He’s crossed the *great divide* of sin – making Him the only one who’s capable of offering such an invitation. **But will you take it!**

I heard about a man walking down road w/ big sack of potatoes on his shoulder – a sack so heavy he was struggling to walk and sweat was pouring from his brow. Much to his pleasure, an old farmer in a pickup pulled up behind him and offered him a ride. The gentleman climbed into the truck, but kept sack on his shoulder. After a few of blocks, the driver looked over and said, “It’d be okay for you to put the sack on the floor and relax.” To which the man replied, “No sir, I’ll not do it...it’s enough that you’d pick me up and carry me to town, but I’m not gonna ask you to carry these taters!”

Each of us shares an overwhelming burden called sin that so long as we attempt to carry the load in our ability we’ll never find rest. Rest can only be found in One person (Jesus), at One place (Calvary), based on One provision (His sacrifice).

So if *rest* is what you need, can I invite you to lay down your sack of sin and hitch your faith to the yoke of Christ – for it is only through Christ we can experience **Greater Things.**