

Easy and Light

Series: From Stressed to Rest

Matthew 11:28-30

September 30, 2018

Thanks for being here today. I invite you to turn to page 5 in your bulletin. And while you are doing that, I hope that you will stay for some good fellowship and food after worship.

And since we are looking ahead, next week, we will begin a new message series I'm calling "God's Top Hits." We are going to look at the songbook, the hymnal, of the Bible. We're going to do a study of the Psalms. And I think when we finish, you will be amazed at what the Psalms will tell us about having a relationship with the Lord and how we are to walk in His ways. That starts next week.

But we are still in this week, and we are finishing our series, "From Stressed to Rest." Remember our first week, I said all I had for this series before we started was the theme stress, and I really wasn't sure if we would do it. But I sensed the Lord saying to go ahead, and man, was He right. So many have said how important this series has been for them, including yours truly.

We've been focusing on these wonderful words from Jesus recorded only in the Gospel of Matthew, the 11th chapter, and the 28th-30th verses. Let's read this passage together.

*"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."*¹

We have looked at the imperative, or command verbs: come, take, learn. To close, we will look at verse 30:

*For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."*²

Jesus says that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. End of story.

However, I think it is fairly accurate to say that the majority of us do not always feel like this is true. There are days, weeks, or even prolonged seasons in which Jesus' yoke seems to us unbearably hard and His burden feels crushingly heavy.

In fact, many people believe that it is a very hard thing to be a Christian. How many times I have heard someone say to me, "Being a Christian is hard." Now think of that, that the Lord is a hard master and the devil is an easy one; for we are serving one or the other; there is no such thing as being neutral. We must be serving the prince of darkness, or the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as a person being on both sides, at the same time.

Is it true that the Lord is a hard master, and the devil an easy one? It seems to me that the ones who can testify in this matter are those who have served both masters. I have yet to find the first man or woman, that ever served the Lord Jesus, that came with the testimony that He is a hard master. And I have yet to find the person that has served the devil that does not testify that he is a hard master. The way of the transgressor is hard.

¹ Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT2)

² Matthew 11:30 (NLT2)

But Jesus said, “For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”³
The word “yoke” is used figuratively 14 times in the Bible.⁴ Let’s try to understand then what Jesus means.

He says, “My yoke is easy.” The word “easy” in Greek is *chrēstos*.⁵ One commentator suggests that “easy” is a poor translation of *chrēstos*, that it should be translated “kindly.”⁶ *Chrēstos* can also mean well-fitting. In Palestine, ox-yokes were made of wood; the oxen were brought, and the measurements were taken. The yoke was then roughed out, and the oxen was brought back to have the yoke tried on. The yoke was carefully adjusted, so that it would fit well, and not gouge the neck of the animal. The yoke was tailor-made to fit the ox.

There is a legend that Jesus made the best ox-yokes in all Galilee, and that from all over the country, people came to Him to buy the best yokes that skill could make. In those days, as now, shops had their signs above the door; and it has been suggested that the sign above the door of the carpenter’s shop in Nazareth may well have been: “My yokes fit well.” It may well be that Jesus then was using a picture from the carpenter’s shop in Nazareth where he had worked before His ministry began.

So, Jesus is saying, “My yoke fits well.” What He means is this: “The life I give you is not a burden to gouge you; your task is tailor made to measure to fit you.” Whatever God sends us is made to fit our needs and our abilities exactly.

Jesus also says, “My burden is light.” As a Rabbi put it: “My burden is become my song.” It is not that the burden is easy to carry; but it is laid on us in love; it is meant to be carried in love; and love makes even the heaviest burden light. When we remember the love of God, when we know that our burden is to love God and to love people, then the burden becomes a song.

There is an old story which tells how a man came upon a little boy carrying a still smaller boy, who was lame, upon his back. “That’s a heavy burden for you to carry,” said the man. “It’s not a burden,” came the answer. “That’s my wee brother.” The burden which is given in love and carried in love is always light.⁷

So why is Jesus yoke easy and His burden light. Let’s quickly look at three things.

First, Jesus’ yoke is a two-person yoke.

A pastor told the story that after he finished his sermon on Christ’s invitation to the labored and heavy laden, a man came to him saying: “Do you know why Christ’s yoke is light?” “Well,” the pastor said, “because the good Lord helps us to carry it, I suppose.”

“No,” the man said, shaking his head, “I think I know better than that. You see, when I was a boy at home, I used to drive the oxen, and the yoke was never made to balance – as you said. Father’s yokes were always made heavier on one side than the other. Then we would put a weak ox alongside a strong ox; and the light end would come on the weak ox, the heavier end on the stronger one. That’s why the Lord’s yoke

³ Matthew 11:30 (NLT2)

⁴ Leviticus 26:13; Isaiah 9:4; 10:27; Jeremiah 2:20; 5:5; 28:2; 28:4; 28:10; 30:8; Lamentations 1:14; 3:27; Matthew 11:29; 11:30; Acts 15:10. Nave’s Topical Bible: A Digest of The Holy Scriptures, “Yoke”

⁵ χρηστός

⁶ Word Pictures in the New Testament, Matthew 11:29

⁷ Barclay’s Daily Study Bible, Matthew 11:28-30

is easy and His burden light, because His yoke is made after the same pattern, and the heavy end is upon His shoulder.”⁸

You know the Footprints in the Sand poem:
One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.
“Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You’d walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I don’t understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me.”

He whispered, “My precious child, I love you and will never leave you
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you.”⁹

Sometimes, we think we are walking this journey alone, but we are never alone.
He is carrying the heavy part of the load.

Second, Jesus’ yoke is easy, not burdensome.

The Sunday School teacher asked, “Who can tell me what a yoke is?”

A little girl said, “Something they put on the necks of animals.”

“What is the meaning of God’s yoke?” the teacher asked.

The girl thought for a moment, then said, “That’s when God puts His arms around our necks!”¹⁰

Psalm 55:22 says,

*Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.*¹¹

1 Peter 5:7 reads,

*Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.*¹²

⁸ Mark Guy Pearse

⁹ Mary Fishback Powers

¹⁰ Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times, Yoke

¹¹ Psalm 55:22 (NLT2)

¹² 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT2)

I cannot image those who have been diagnosed with cancer who do not have the Lord in their lives. The burden of the diagnosis and the treatment is so hard to bear. In fact, a 2009 Cancer study showed that women who were told they had a serious illness were seven times as likely to become separated or divorced as men with similar health problems.¹³ I can't imagine being a woman facing something like breast cancer and her husband or boyfriend, who said that would be with her 1,000%, end up leaving her. The burden is too great to handle by yourself.

But the believer knows that Christ is with them, and no matter what happens, they believe, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."¹⁴ Through Christ, we find ease. Without Christ, life is a burden.

Finally, Jesus' yoke brings peace, not stress.

When He was in the Upper Room just before being betrayed, then crucified, I'm sure the disciples could sense that something was different about Jesus that night. He was carrying something, but they didn't understand what. So, to reassure them, He said,

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*¹⁵

- "Peace I leave with you." This was a Jewish form of salutation and benediction, like Mr. Spock phrase, "Live long and prosper" (which is also a Jewish phrase). It is a wish of peace among them and to us that assures us peace.
- "My peace I give to you." This is specific peace from Jesus, a tranquility of soul, uninterrupted happiness of mind, everlasting friendship with God as He Jesus enjoys, which He wants us to enjoy as well! And such blessedness Jesus bequeaths to us: it is His last, His best, His dying legacy.
- "Not as the world gives." Not as the Jews gave in empty wishes; not as the people of the world in their empty compliments; not as the treaties of the world that are kept today and forgotten tomorrow. To His followers, Jesus gives peace, procures it, preserves it, and establishes it. He is the author, prince, promoter, and keeper of peace.
- "Do not be afraid." Jesus is saying, "Let not your heart shrink back through fear of any approaching evil. In a few hours, you will feel assaulted at the news of my crucifixion, but stand firm. The evil will only fall upon me; and this evil will result in your comfort and salvation, and in the redemption of a lost world."¹⁶

My friend, don't let Satan make you believe God will not care for you. Don't let the world stress you out.

Come to Jesus, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and He will give you rest. Take His yoke upon you, and learn from Him; for He is gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul. For His yoke is easy, and His burden is light."

¹³ <https://medium.com/@CancerBTTB/50-percent-of-couples-break-up-during-a-cancer-diagnosis-29133893975f>

¹⁴ Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)

¹⁵ John 14:27 (NRSV)

¹⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary, John 14:27