Topical Approximately 30 minutes

★ Rest for the Weary as We Approach Harvest Season

Matthew 11:28-30

🙏 Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for bringing us together around Your Word. Some of us come today full of gratitude. Others come tired, worried, or carrying burdens no one else can see. As we approach this harvest season, help us hear the voice of Jesus above the noise of our busy lives. Teach us what it means to rest in Him, and prepare our hearts for the work You have given us to do. In Jesus' name, amen.

★ 🏛️ 📜 Historical Setting: A Burdened People Hear an Invitation

Imagine living in Galilee when Jesus walked its roads. Most families knew hard physical work. Fishermen rose before daylight. Farmers watched the weather and worked their fields. A harvest could mean food for the household and income to carry them through the coming months. When the grain was ready, they could **not** simply put the work off until a more convenient week.

The people also lived under Roman rule. Taxes were a real burden, and many longed for God to deliver His people. On top of daily pressures, some religious teachers had made faith feel like another heavy load. People were told what to do, but they were not always helped to draw near to God.

Into that world, Jesus spoke these remarkable words:

📖✝️(NIV)***Matthew 11:28-30 28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” [1]***

Can you picture a farmer hearing that after a long day? Or a mother who had given everything she had to her family? Or someone who knew the Scriptures but still wondered, *Have I done enough for God to accept me?*

Jesus did not call only the people who had their lives together. He called the weary and burdened. That invitation is just as alive today.

[1] *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 11:28–30.

Harvest season is a beautiful time. Fields become golden, gardens bear fruit, and we enjoy the results of patient work. But harvest season can also be demanding. There is much to gather, much to finish, and often too little daylight to do it all.

Some of us are approaching this season with thankful hearts. Others are approaching it exhausted. You may be tired from work, family responsibilities, illness, grief, or a struggle you have carried for years. You may be serving the Lord faithfully and still find yourself running on empty.

Today I want us to hear two things Jesus says to His people: **Come to Me for rest, and follow Me into the harvest.** The order matters. He does not ask us to create life out of our own exhaustion. He invites us close to Him.

★ <u>The Rest Jesus Offers Is Personal</u>

Notice that Jesus says, **“Come to me…”** (v.28) He does not say, “First solve every problem.” He does not say, “Get stronger and then come back.” He invites us to Himself.

That is simple enough for a new believer to understand, yet deep enough for a mature believer to spend a lifetime learning.

Christian, rest is more than a day off or a good night’s sleep, though both are valuable. It begins with a Person. We come to Jesus because He is the One who can carry what we cannot.

Sometimes we mistake rest for the absence of work. We think, *Once everything is finished, then I can rest.* But when is everything finished?

- The next bill arrives.
- Someone needs help.
- The car breaks down.
- Another problem appears.

Jesus offered rest to people who still had fields to tend, children to raise, and decisions to make. Their circumstances would not all change by sunset. 👉 **But their relationship to God could change**. They could stop living as though everything depended on their own strength.

In Matthew 11:29, Jesus tells us to take His yoke upon us and learn from Him. A yoke was a wooden frame used with working animals. His listeners understood that picture immediately. A yoke spoke of direction and work.

🤔 💭 So why does Jesus mention a yoke when He is offering rest?

🤔 🔓 🔑 Because His rest is not a call to wander without purpose. It is an invitation to walk with Him, under His guidance. We learn His way instead of letting fear, guilt, or the demands of other people drive us.

And what kind of teacher is He? Jesus describes Himself as gentle and humble in heart.

If you are afraid that coming to Him will mean another harsh voice telling you that you are never enough, hear His own description.

- 🔍 👀 He is gentle.
- He knows your weakness, and He welcomes you.

★ <u>We Cannot Earn What Jesus Gives</u>

There is a burden many people carry that is heavier than a full day's labor. It is the burden of trying to make ourselves right with God.

🤔 💭 We say, "I'll come to the Lord when I clean up my life." Or, "Maybe if I do enough good things, God will overlook the bad."

👉 But sin is not a debt we can work off with extra effort. We need **forgiveness** and **new life**, and **Jesus** came to give us what we could never earn.

- The cross shows us how seriously God takes our sin.
- The resurrection shows us that Jesus has overcome death.

When we turn to **Him in faith**, we do **not** come presenting a harvest of perfect deeds. 🤔 💭 We come empty-handed and receive His grace.

That truth also speaks to believers who have been walking with Jesus for decades.

🤔 💭 You may no longer be trying to earn salvation, but are you trying to earn His love every morning? Do you feel that He is pleased with you only when your schedule is full and your strength is high?

The work we do for Christ matters. Yet our place with Him rests on what *He* has done. We serve from His love, not to purchase it.

★ There Is a Season to Sow and a Season to Reap

Now let us turn toward the harvest.

🤔 💭 A farmer knows that harvest does not begin when the first grain is cut.

- It begins much earlier, when seed goes into the ground.
- Then comes waiting, watering, tending, and trusting.
- For a long time, there may be little to show for the labor.

🔍 👀 Perhaps you know what that feels like. You have prayed for a family member for years. You have spoken kindly to a neighbor who seems uninterested in faith. You have taught children the Scriptures and

wondered what they truly heard. You have served quietly, and no one has noticed.

Paul encouraged the church in 📖✝️ (NIV)***Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.***[2]

🤔🔓🔑 So, not to grow weary in doing good, because a harvest comes in God's time **if we do not give up**.

👉 That is a word for tired servants. Faithful work may take longer to bear fruit than we hoped, but the Lord sees it.

At the same time, we must remember that we cannot make a seed grow by pulling on it. We can speak the truth, show love, pray, and remain faithful.

[2] *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ga 6:9.

🤔 🔓 🔑 God gives the growth. That is why we can work diligently without carrying the impossible burden of controlling the outcome.

As harvest season approaches, look at the fields around you. 🔍 👀 Let them remind you to ask, ***Lord, where have You placed me to sow? And where might You already be preparing someone to hear about Jesus?***

- Your harvest field may be your kitchen table.
- It may be your workplace,
- your neighborhood,
- a hospital waiting room,
- or a conversation with an old friend.

You do not need a stage to be useful to God. 💡 Sometimes the most important **ministry** begins when you make time to listen.

★ Jesus Sees the People in the Field

Matthew 9:35-38 [35] Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. [36] When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. [37] Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. [38] Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." [3]

In Matthew 9, Jesus traveled through towns and villages teaching and healing. When He saw the crowds,

- He had compassion on them.
- He saw more than a gathering of people.

[3] *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 9:35–38.

- He saw their need.

Then He spoke about the **harvest**. Jesus said it was **plentiful**, but the **workers were few**, and He told His disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers.

That gives us a beautiful picture of His heart. Jesus did not look at weary people and say, “They are an inconvenience.” He had compassion. And when He sent workers, He wanted them to go with that same compassion.

🤔 💭 We need that reminder. It is possible to become so focused on getting ministry done that we stop seeing the people in front of us. We may count invitations, events, and tasks while missing the lonely person who needs a conversation.

👉 Jesus sees people.

- The woman who has quietly stopped coming to church.
- The young man who laughs at spiritual things but asks serious questions when no one else is around.
- The older neighbor who has buried a spouse and dreads going home to an empty house.
- The family member who keeps saying, **“I’m fine,”** when you know the year has been hard.

The harvest is not a project. These are people loved by God. We can pray for them by name, speak with kindness, and share the hope we have in Christ.

🤔 🔓 🔑 And if you are tired today, remember this: Jesus sees *you*, too. You are not merely another worker to Him. You are someone He loves and calls to come near.

★ Rest Helps Us Remain Faithful

There is a difference between being tired after a good day's work and being worn down because we believe we are never allowed to stop.

Jesus understands human limits. During His earthly ministry, He made time to pray, and He called His disciples away to rest after demanding work.

Rest can be an act of trust. When we pause to pray, sleep, worship, or sit with the Lord, we admit that He is God and we are not. The world remains in His hands while we rest.

This may be difficult for those of us who like to be **dependable**. We want to answer every call and meet every need. But we cannot serve well for long if we keep ignoring the limits God has given us.

🤔 💭 Perhaps the step you need today is to bring one specific burden to Jesus. Name it in prayer. Tell Him plainly, **"Lord, I**

cannot carry this alone.” Ask for wisdom about what He has actually given you to do today. Then take the next faithful step and trust Him with what lies beyond your reach.

For some of us, that next step will be to serve. For others, it will be to accept help. Both can require **humility**.

★ The Lord of the Harvest Is With Us

👉 Here is what makes this message exciting: the harvest belongs to the Lord. We get to take part in what **He** is doing.

Think of the disciples. They were ordinary people. They did not have enough money, influence, or strength to change the world on their own. Yet Jesus called them, taught them, and sent them.

🤔 💭 The power was never in **their ability** to produce a harvest by themselves. 🤔 🔓 🔑 Their hope was in the One who sent them.

That is our hope as well. You may feel that your words are too simple or your strength too small. But the Lord can use a

- sincere testimony,
- a quiet act of kindness,
- and an open Bible.
- He can use the person who says, “I don’t have every answer, but let me tell you what Jesus has done for me.”

As we approach harvest season, let us not wait until we feel impressive enough to serve.

Let us come to Jesus, receive His rest, and follow where He leads.

💡 There may be someone nearby who is ready to hear the good news.

★ **An Invitation to New Life**

Before we close, I want to speak to anyone who has been carrying the burden of life without Jesus.

- Maybe you are tired of trying to appear strong.
- Maybe you know that something is wrong between you and God, but you do not know how to make it right.

👉 Jesus' invitation is for you: come to Him.

The Bible tells us that we have sinned. We cannot remove that guilt ourselves. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for our sins and rose again.

He offers forgiveness and new life to those who turn from sin and trust in Him.

Being born again is not the result of joining a church or learning religious words. It is the **new life** God gives as you place your faith in Jesus.

You can come honestly, right where you are. Tell Him that you need His mercy. Trust Him as your Savior and follow Him as your Lord.

If you are ready to do that, you can speak to Him now. The prayer itself is not what saves you; Jesus saves those who trust in Him.

🙏 Let us Pray…

Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned and that I cannot save myself… Thank You for dying for my sins and rising again…. I turn to You today…. Please forgive me, give me new life, and teach me to follow You…. Amen.

- If you have placed your trust in Christ today, tell a faithful Christian or a pastor.
- Begin reading the Bible,
- talk with the Lord in prayer,
- and gather with a church that teaches His Word.

🤔 💭 You do not have to begin this new life alone.

👉 And to every believer who came in weary: hear Jesus' invitation again. Come to Him. Learn from Him. Then, strengthened by His grace, take your place in the harvest field He has given you.

🙏 Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for the gentle invitation of Jesus. Thank You that weary people can come to Him and find rest for their souls. Forgive us for the times we have tried to carry life, ministry, and even our relationship with You in our own strength.

As we approach harvest season, give us grateful hearts for all You have provided. Open our eyes to the people around us. Help us sow faithfully, wait patiently, and speak about Jesus with compassion and courage. Refresh those who are tired. Comfort those who are grieving. Strengthen those who are serving quietly and wondering whether their labor matters.

And for anyone who has turned to Christ today, help them grow in Your Word and know the joy of walking with You. We place the work and the harvest in Your hands. In the name of Jesus, amen.