

**Jesus Invites us to a Relationship with the Father & Son**  
Matthew 11:25-30

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Ryan, a college student, is out of money half way through his school year. It's not because of mismanagement or reckless spending. His car broke down and required a major repair. He had to go home to see his Mom on an unexpected trip because she got sick. Now, he can't pay his fees. He doesn't know what to do. A girl, Amber, has suspicions about her boyfriend. He's been acting a little strange lately. He's been vague with answers when she asks what he did last night or where he was. She doesn't know if there's something wrong in their relationship.

Fran, an employee doubts about the security of her position. Her manager has been in a lot of meetings lately. Fran's requests for an extra meeting seem to be brushed off or always answered with a "maybe next week." Will Fran keep her job? John just had his annual physical. His doctor did a lot of new tests to determine the status of John's health. He was pretty anxious about the test results so he asked the doctor to update him as soon as possible. John received a call from the doctor's office late one Friday afternoon. But he was in a meeting and by the time he called back the office was closed. Now he would have to wait the weekend to find out.

Maybe you have experienced or can relate to situations like this. Sometimes, roadblocks stand in our way and we question whether or not we have to stop or give up or go a whole different direction. Maybe we question whether a person we trusted or put our faith in remains trustworthy.

Sometimes our worst fears are confirmed. We get bad news. But this is not always the case. Ryan, the college student, shared about his troubles in his young adults group. Word got around about his need. Three days later an anonymous donor paid off Ryan's tuition for the rest of that year. Amber's suspicions about her boyfriend continued. But they planned a date Saturday night where she would confront him. He invited her to a restaurant they'd never gone to before. But upon arrival, she was ushered to the back party room where her boyfriend and 15 other friends surprised her for her birthday. He'd been working on this all that time.

Fran finally got a meeting with her manager. But upon entering the office, the big boss was there smiling. She informed Fran that she was getting a promotion and they had been working on all the details. John woke up Monday morning and waited for the doctor's office to open. He hesitantly dialed the number. The receptionist answered and the doctor was not yet busy. He came on the phone with the news, "John, every test looks good. In each situation, some

information or action by another brought clarity, hope and renewed passion for the pursuit. We may have followed Jesus for a long time or short time.

We may have times where we doubt Jesus. We may wonder if He is there in our darkness or cares about our circumstances, or is still worthy of our trust. Jesus shows again and again His willingness to address our doubts or bring some perspective or intervene in a way that enables us to keep going.

### **Jesus addresses doubts or confusion about Him as Messiah and Lord.**

In the first part of Matthew 11, Jesus addressed the doubts of John the Baptist and his disciples. John asked if Jesus was the one to come or should he look for someone else. John and His disciples expected the Messiah to bring judgment and justice down upon all the corrupt authorities. Jesus responded by reminding Him of the hope, healing and good news part of the Messiah's work. It was like Jesus reminded John to broaden his perspective of the Messiah's ministry.

Then Jesus helped the crowd with its doubts about John the Baptist. They may have wondered if he was truly a prophet from God or just some flash in the pan preacher who was now jailed. But Jesus reminded them that John was a type of Elijah promised in the last verses of the Old Testament. If John was Elijah, then Jesus was the Christ.

Last week we looked at Jesus' warnings about rejecting or ignoring God's revelation thru John and Him. Such a responses will result in a dreadful Day of Judgment before God without Christ's protection.

But think about the people who watched all this unfold. Think about the original readers who may have assumed that the widespread support for Jesus would continue to the end of this Gospel. Now they hear about a whole generation rejecting Jesus. They hear that whole cities have not responded. How could this happen if Jesus was truly the Messiah and the Son of God? Was He worthy of their trust in light of these realities?

We can ask similar questions especially when the circumstances in our lives take a turn for the worse. Or when we look around at others and see the vast majority of people rejecting or ignoring Jesus.

In our passage today, Jesus will pull back the curtain to give reassurance that He is still in control and accomplishing His purposes in the world and in our lives. I pray as we go through Jesus words, you will gain assurance and comfort of His continuing work in and around your life to stand firm in the Faith.

### **Matthew 11:25-30 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup>At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; <sup>26</sup>yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>27</sup>All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. <sup>28</sup>Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

### **How does Jesus address doubts about Him as Messiah and Lord?**

**1 - Jesus' prayer explains why the wise and learned rejected Jesus while "children" accepted him.** The wise and learned of the society mostly rejected Jesus. Most of the religious leadership and scholars did not follow Him. This would naturally lead to questions about His credibility. When authorities have suspicions and concerns about one of their citizens, it can cast a lot of doubt on that citizen's credibility.

But in verses 25 and 26, Jesus suddenly breaks into prayer. It explains why the wise and learned reject Jesus. Matthew writes "at that time," the time when doubts and questions about Jesus' ministry began to spread, "Jesus declared." So this is not some off the cuff comment or prayer of desperation by Jesus to His Father. This prayer declares the way things are. "I thank you Father." Jesus prays to His Father, calling Him Lord of heaven and earth. God the Father is supreme and sovereign over everything and everyone in heaven and earth. This includes the wise and the learned.

Jesus' prayer reveals how God operates with the wise and the learned. "You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding." What are these things? There are many possibilities. Maybe they are the significance of Jesus' mission and message. Maybe they are the activities of the kingdom of heaven which require faith and humility to grasp. Maybe it is the plan of salvation or the deeds and words of Jesus in his Galilean ministry that disclose the presence of the kingdom. Whatever Jesus had exactly in mind at that moment, *these things* were vital to grasp His identity and call for repentance and faith.

Yet God hides these things from the wise and understanding and reveals them to little children. This refers to not only those young in age but those who the wise and learned would consider ignorant and uneducated. They were considered insignificant and irrelevant. They were not the major players in the nation. They did not hold positions of

power or influence. Yet they understand these things. In fact, Jesus says it was His Father's gracious will or it greatly pleased His Father to hide from the wise and reveal to the children.

But that doesn't sound very fair. Why would the Father hide this revelation from the wise? I think a major reason God does this is because the wise placed great value on their own human reasoning. They maybe believed that by their own wisdom, they could figure out the path to salvation. One commentator says *"the wise of Jesus' day had careful rules for interpreting the Bible and often rested in the security of the academic consensus of their circle. They prided themselves on their knowledge of traditional interpretations and sayings of the wise who had gone before them."* And so if the Father revealed all "these things" to the wise and learned, they might incorporate them into their own system of interpretation. Then they could claim that their own ability to figure things out led them to the divine. Yet they would actually misunderstand the way to the kingdom was through repentance and coming to Jesus.

This still happens today. Take a look at any "Spirituality" section in a bookstore. Look at the Gazette's ads under the worship. There's a gnostic group the focuses on the secret knowledge that they have that leads to the divine. Remember the New Age movement? That was all about mixing some astrology with eastern thinking and the power of self into some sort of recipe that promised this divine or spiritual awakening into a new age. Today, the new atheism basically claims that we humans can figure out everything if we just have enough time.

I'll never forget the interview I listened to with Skeptic Michael Shermer. He founded the Skeptics Society and serves as Chief Editor of its magazine. It aims to investigate and disprove pseudoscientific and supernatural claims. He used to be a fundamentalist Christian, involved in a church, He went through its youth ministries but ceased believing in God during his graduate studies. During the interview, he was asked how can we know truth or scientific fact? He answered "the peer review process is the best we've got." So someone writes an article or a book. Other people critique and review it and the academic consensus that comes out of that is the fact. It sounds a lot like the wise and intelligent Jesus talks about.

But the Father hides the revelation of these things from the wise and intelligent.

We cannot figure everything out by our own wisdom and knowledge. As Ravi Zacharias puts it "God gives us enough information so that we can solidly claim that Christianity is a Reasonable Faith. But He does not give us enough information so that we can reason it out on our own." The kingdom of heaven is received by humility and faith. So it is

possible for a wise and intelligent person to become a Christian. But they must be willing to humble themselves and trust by faith the things they cannot explain. The revelation of God, Jesus' identity and salvation ultimately must come from God.

How else does Jesus address doubts? Jesus addresses doubts about Himself by explaining why the wise and intelligent reject Him. **2 - Jesus emphasizes the authority the Father has given the Son (Him).** Verse 27 is a critical verse in the first three Gospels. It is one of the very few places where the Gospel writer includes Jesus' words about His relationship with His Father. We find lots of that in John. But this verse gives us great insight into the workings and relationship of Father and Son.

In the first part of the verse, Jesus reveals the Father has given to Him something. Verse 27. "All things have been handed over to me by my Father." What is "all things?" It could be everything needed to carry out Christ's ministry of redemption. It could be authority over Satan, his demons, nature, life and death. It could be everything with respect to salvation or the kingdom of heaven. Whatever He means exactly, this is a whole boatload of authority and responsibility.

Now how will this assure or encourage those who doubt? Well most people who listened to Jesus that day or first read Matthew believed that God had authority over all things. Those with an active faith trusted that even though the Romans currently ruled them, God still ultimately ruled. But now they are given the information that all of this has been handed over to Jesus. God does not hand over all things to just anyone. If God, the Father entrusts all things to Jesus, He must have great confidence in Him. So even though the authorities, the wise, most of the religious leadership and many in the surrounding region reject Jesus, God has not rejected Him. God has handed over all things to Him. Jesus didn't force them from God's hands. It was a voluntary handover to one deemed trustworthy.

And remember that Jesus' listeners that day and the first readers of this Gospel did not have a clear understanding of the Trinity, – God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. God is one, yet exists in three co-equal persons. These first readers didn't have the New Testament. So Jesus can claim that He has received all things from the Father. But is Jesus just some impressive human prophet? He addresses this in the next phrases of verse 27.

Here we find the third way Jesus addresses doubts about Him as Messiah and Lord.

**3- Jesus describes the exclusive intimate relationship of knowledge between the Father and Son.** Verse 27 – *All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son.* What kind of a Son is this the first readers may have asked? Is he a son of Israel like they all were? Is he a son of David, like some of them were? Yes, he was both but so much more. He was the Son whom no one knew like the Father knew Him. He was the Son who knew the Father like no one else knew Him. There is an exclusive intimate relationship of knowledge about one another.

Now we normally think exclusive relationships are bad. They refer to two people who relate to one another and exclude or shut out others. But in this case, the exclusion part refers to how much knowledge they have of one another. No human comes close to knowing God the Father like Jesus knows Him. No human comes close to knowing Jesus like God the Father knows Him. So how is that reassuring?

Well this reveals that the Father's entrustment of all things to Jesus was no Hail Mary hope that Jesus comes through in the end. It wasn't like the Father handed over his business to a son with questionable character. And the Father knows the Son intimately. So to the first century listener who may doubt Jesus claims to Messiah, they now hear that God has handed over everything to Him AND He and the Father know each other like no one else. This is beginning to look like God is sovereign over all this opposition. There's a lot more going on than just Jesus losing popularity, God is in control.

So we've seen 3 ways in which Jesus addresses doubts about His Messianic claims and the growing rejection he faced. 1 - The rejection by the wise and learned is not unexpected because God hides his revelation from them lest they conclude they can reach Him on their own wisdom. 2 – God has handed over all things to Jesus. 3 – God the Father and God the Son have an intimate knowledge of one another that no one else comes close to. But where does that leave us in relation to God? If God hides revelation and God hands over all things to Jesus and they have this intimate knowledge of each other that we can't come close to, how do we connect with God?

Jesus answers that wonderfully in the rest of the passage. **Jesus reveals how salvation, rest and life God's way are all found in Him.** He does this in a couple of ways. First, he reveals **No one knows the Father except by the Son's choice.** So we can't get to God the Father without Jesus' choice. We can't reach God without Jesus' help. The Father

has given Jesus the sole privilege to reveal the Father. So anyone who tries to approach God apart from Jesus can't reach Him. It depends on Jesus' choice. So Jesus describes Himself and His will as key to approaching the Father.

Now for some of you, there might be an elephant that has just rumbled into the room right now. What is that word "choose" doing there? Isn't the Gospel offered to everyone? Romans 10:13 states, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved?" Yes. Doesn't Peter state in 2 Peter 3:9 "the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance? Yes. So how can Jesus choose to reveal the Father to some and not choose to reveal the Father to others?

This is the dilemma presented by what is called election or God's sovereign choice or here the Son's choice. We see God's election throughout the Bible. But Christians debate the mechanics of election. Does God choose just based on His own decision or does something in the person affect God's choice? We can get our backs up when we perceive something that violates our free will. If God chooses then do we really have a choice? All these questions arise when it comes to this question of choosing.

Now we are not going to solve this question today. In fact, this debate and attempt to understand has been going on for hundreds of years and right back to the New Testament. So I want to leave you with 2 truths we can claim from the Bible. Then you can struggle a little more with this on your own before we get back to what Jesus is doing here. So the first truth is God chooses those who will be saved. We see that here in verse 27. The Son chooses to whom He will reveal the Father. But the second truth is also found throughout the New Testament – Humans are responsible for their choices. Our choices are real choices. God doesn't deceive us into thinking we're choosing or deciding to follow Him. The New Testament calls us to repent, believe, cry out and trust. Somehow these two truths can exist together in the wisdom and mystery of God. This is an example where we come to end of our ability to completely understand. Here there must be faith that God is right and wise to do things this way. Hopefully that will stimulate a little lunch time conversation.

But what does Jesus accomplish in revealing this in verse 27? He shows us that our connection to the Father comes through Him. So what does Jesus do next? He pronounces the most famous and comforting invitations in all of Scripture. So remember Jesus reveals how salvation, rest and God's way of life is found in Him. Here's the invitation.

**So to receive such salvation, rest, and learn God's way of living, we must come to Jesus. (11:28-30).**

Now this invitation is a major challenge to Jesus' first listeners and the readers in the first century. What kind of salvation did they expect from the Messiah? They wanted him to overthrow the corrupt authorities and bring justice. They wanted their nation reestablished and restored. They wanted a national salvation. But Jesus now reveals that He has come to bring personal salvation.

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Come to me means to trust Jesus personally, not just believe some historical facts about him. I used to think that "labor and heavy laden" referred to the burdens of ordinary life. But when we come to Jesus, life's burdens don't just disappear. We still have to face illness, challenges, suffering and disappointment.

But a closer reading of Matthew has taught me that the labor and heavy burdens referred to are much more about keeping the law and oral rules imposed on the people by some of the Pharisees. With that heavy weight, people were exhausted trying to walk with God. If that's what Jesus means, it helps us define what he means by rest. It's not rest on the beach. It's not sleep. To rest here means to cease from the labor of trying to keep all the rules and traditions added to the law by the religious leaders of the day.

So Jesus says "you can rest from all of that." But that didn't mean they could just live lawless lives. That didn't mean they were free to do whatever they wanted. Jesus says "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." The yoke was a wooden frame joining two animals together for pulling a heavy load. So how do we interpret yoke here? Does Jesus mean he will join us in pulling our load in life? Or will he place a load on us that is well fitting to us that will not exhaust our souls.

I would go with the second option. Taking someone's yoke upon yourself meant you were willing to submit to them. You submitted to their leading and the load they placed on you. But Jesus addresses doubts about submitting to another's leadership and lordship. "I am gentle in heart. I won't be a harsh taskmaster that will overload you. My yoke is easy and light. It doesn't mean life will be easy. But the way I lead and guide you will be for your best. It will help you bear the weight of life without having to bear additional weight of rules put in place by other people." This is the journey of discipleship under Jesus. We come to Him and receive rest from trying to find God through some man made

rules. Instead we submit to His leadership and guidance and live God's way. Jesus provides us with Himself and the Spirit to empower us to live God's way.

So this invitation is still beautiful and comforting. But it also real and moves away from the ridiculous promises made by the prosperity gospel where God is guaranteed to make you healthy and wealthy. That's a false gospel that leads so many away from the reality of discipleship.

But here Jesus gives us a glimpse of how God works, how He and the Father relate to each other and that we can only come to God through Him. How will we respond? I think the answer is the H – Word. Humbly. We must humble ourselves before God to come to Him through Jesus. We must humbly receive the yoke of discipleship from Jesus.

We may need to humbly admit that Jesus is not our life's number one priority. Maybe we've been living with God as priority number 23. But He must be number 1. I was struck again this past week in reading a story in Christianity Today by scholar Craig Keener.

Keener is a New Testament scholar but does most of his devotions in the Old Testament. He encountered God deeply through the prophets Hosea and Jeremiah. In Hosea, he found God's broken heart and longing for his covenantal people who were so often unfaithful to Him. Yet God, even in his anger, remained faithful to Israel. God's love for his unfaithful people is demonstrated concretely in Hosea's marriage to an unfaithful wife.

But Keener never expected that part of Hosea's story would become his own. In his last semester of seminary, his wife began to talk of turning away from God. Her entire behavior changed. In prayer, he sensed God telling him that she was being unfaithful. He thought that meant unfaithful to God. But when she and her best friend's husband both disappeared one weekend, he realized the awful truth. Upon returning a few days later, she announced that she was going to leave him and marry her best friend's husband.

Keener's marriage and ministry were shattered. He was devastated and no longer felt God's presence. He was too broken and numb to feel anything. He needed to be around other people to feed off their will to live.

Then he writes this: "Unable to sleep one night, I went outside for a walk. A police officer stopped me, noting that someone had reported a strange man walking around the neighborhood. I apologized and told him that I could not

sleep because my wife was leaving me. A look of compassion crossed the officer's face, and he said, 'Oh, I went through that last year. You go ahead and walk.'

As I walked and prayed, I felt God cut through the numbness of my heart and say, "My child, your wife has not done anything to you – as Hosea's wife did not do anything to him – that my people have not done to me. Day and night, I call to them in my love. And day and night, most of them are wrapped up in things they love more than me."

At the end of the article he writes "As believers, we have not rejected the cross. But sometimes even we are unfaithful to God. He desires our intimate trust in him. And too often we pursue what the world values instead of pursuing God with our whole being. Sometimes we are more like infants than mature children. We call on God when we need him but forget that He passionately loves us, and that he wants to have a dynamic, marriage like relationship with us."

So will you ponder your love for God today and how much He loves you? Will you think about all Jesus has revealed to us today? Then will you come before Him in humility?