

Matthew 11:20-30
Feilding Baptist
22.11.20

[Call to Worship](#)

Greetings and welcome.

The year is coming to an end. People are tired, and some have had enough of 2020. And Jesus says

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.'

Father God, please help us to rest in you this morning. May this time be an oasis, a time of refreshment, as we take time out from all that is going on in our worlds. Please freshen us, give us comfort, strength, fight. Please speak to us Lord and help us to take on your yoke.

Holy Spirit, please speak to our hearts and minds as we worship this morning. Amen.

[Message - Come to me](#)

Jesus is consistent in His concern for us.

There's a wonderful flow in Matthew's writing that we miss in our week by week bites. If we had a two to three hour lecture, we could read a couple of chapters and better appreciate the drama. The flow of the last couple of weeks has been about making a decision for Jesus.

Two weeks ago I said something about making a decision to follow Jesus was not like an election vote. Because when we vote we continue on with life as if nothing happened. Making the decision to follow Jesus has to be more than that, it must affect how we live. And how we work. And how we play. All of our lives.

And we got that last week when Jesus asks the people, so you went out into the desert to see a prophet did you? Well how dumb is that! Prophets are not tourist attractions. You are not supposed to go to look at prophets but listen to them. Where are your ears?!

And Jesus is clearly reflecting on all with Him, the miracles, the teaching, His offer of life. Where is the repentance? Where is the turning around? Why is His call to faith and following not being taken seriously? Eugene Peterson writes in the Message '20 Next Jesus let fly on the cities where he had worked the hardest but whose people had responded the least, shrugging their shoulders and going their own way.'

This call to follow, this call to make a decision for Jesus continues then and for us today.

The towns that are mentioned; Jesus' base was Capernaum at the top of Lake Galilee, Chorazin was less than an hour's walk away up on the plateau (France, 438), Bethsaida was to the east, twice as far, just over the Jordan River 10k's away, the home of the disciples Peter, Andrew & Philip. Tyre and Sidon, these were Phoenician cities on the coast to the west, Sodom down under, literally, the Dead Sea, and Hades, the place of the dead rather than place of punishment (France, 439).

Matthew 11:20-30 (NIV - UK)

[Woe on unrepentant towns](#)

20 Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. 21 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.[a] For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.'

The Father revealed in the Son

25 At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

27 '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.

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.'

Footnotes

Matthew 11:23 That is, the realm of the dead

We are so glad that we went to Tasmania last year. So many holiday plans have been ruined this year. It was our best holiday yet. In the first few days we stayed south of Hobart. And one day we drove as far south as you can, then started walking. The scenery was pretty nice, and the track easy going. After a couple of hours, we could hear the sea, the south coast of Tasmania was getting near.

And up through what has like manuka we arrived at South Cape Bay. A beautiful spot, with wind from the Southern Ocean and nothing between us and Antarctica. Pristine, clean, pure.

Down on the beach we wandered along to Lion Rock. We stopped to look at the smooth stones. The colours were different, and there were some little blue ones. On closer inspection though, the little blue ones weren't stone at all, but bits of plastic. Not so pristine after all! Where did that come from?!

As we look at this passage today, we must hold in tension what was, and what will be. God's intention at the start of the world, the Garden of Eden, in regards to the environment and relationships. Pristine, clean, pure. And again when this age is completed, another time when the rubbish, the bits of blue plastic, the sin and broken relationships will be behind us. What was, and what will be.

And to get there, there is this 'day of judgement' that we must go through. This uncomfortable day, this difficult thing to talk about. This idea of 'turn or burn' when preachers thump the pulpit. There's this idea of a courthouse where God lists sins, and good deeds, and sees who makes the cut like a golf tournament.

How comfortable are you with that?

I'm not. It just seems wrong. And what is the summary for today, Jesus is consistent in His concern for us.

The wrath of God, the love of God

One of the problems with the court house image for the Day of Judgement is the image of a list of our good deeds and bad deeds. This is what the hostages in Peru believed in 1997. For 126 days they were confined

before being freed. And in that time, when it looked like they would die, they began to draw up a balance sheet of their lives. They wanted to know which way they would go when they met God (Rutledge, 308).

This is a works gospel, salvation by works. This ignores grace. That underserved favour. Jesus says come to me, acknowledge me, turn to me. And Jesus offers us the Holy Spirit to help us produce the fruit that He wants in His kingdom.

Jesus' teaching on judgement focuses not so much on what we do, it's more about our relationship with God through Him (Dict of Jesus & Gospels, 410). And this was the problem with Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. They had seen Jesus, but they didn't want to know Jesus.

Then Jesus began to denounce the towns... Jesus is challenging them afresh. Come on, you've seen what I've done, you've heard what I've said, you've seen God in action, what's wrong with you? But, Chorazin was well off. Chorazin was located just up the road on the fertile plateau. There they grew wheat and were doing very well thank you (Freedman, 236). Bethsaida was in the other direction, just over the Jordan River mouth, in an area that had an abundance of not grain, but fish and game (as the name suggests, Freedman, 174). They too were well off. And Capernaum was the border town between two Herod territories (Antipas & Philip), so they had wealth and prestige. And arrogance.

My goodness, we could call these towns Ashburton, Hokitika, Wellington! They could be many places in New Zealand! This could be us. This sounds like us. But if we're honest, we do live with little blue bits of plastic in our lives. And Jesus says, come to me, get rid of it. Walk with me. Don't rely on yourselves. Free yourselves. I've died for you. Risen again for you. Am still looking out for you, calling you.

As Jesus calls the three towns, so Jesus calls us.

And leaves us with a choice.

If that's a choice you'd like to talk about or pray about, Hazel would be very keen to do that afterwards, as would our elders, or me!

The Day of Judgment, the day of the Lord's fierce anger should worry us. But it should also give us hope. For this is the day when creation is set to rights, and returned to how God intended it. At this time, all that contaminates us will be permanently eliminated. We will finally be able to breathe the air of eternal life.

We really should see the wrath of God as the love of God against anything that would frustrate or damage His purpose (Rutledge, 323). I really like this line, 'God's love does not cease to be love even when it is expressed in wrath' (McCormack in Rutledge, 323).

So to sum up so far, Jesus is looking for repentance, a turning to follow Him. We have to choose. We will either be on the side of the blue plastic, or on Jesus' side. And this is about relationship with Him.

One side leads to life. One leads to Hades.

v25-30 The Offer of Rest

The last six verses continue the flavour. Verse 25 contrast those who are trying to live on their own, self sufficient. They deem themselves wise. These are contrasted with the humble who like little children come to Jesus, are dependent and love to be taught (Carson in Osborne, 445).

These humble and dependent followers, will experience rest we see in v28. This rest is here and now in our relationship with God, as well as eternal rest in heaven (Osborne, 442). (see too Hebrew 3:7-4:16)

And finally, v29 take my yoke. Wow, this was radical for the people back then. The yoke here is most likely the yoke that two animals would share, halving the load. (The other kind is what a slave is required to have by their master.) The yoke here is not just following Jesus in discipleship, but walking with. This is about loyalty and obedience to Jesus' teaching (Osborne, 443).

It's not something we're given. It's something we must take. Again, this was the problem with the three towns, they wouldn't pick it up. We are to place the yoke on ourselves. We are to be willingly obedient. (Osborne, 443).

Why is Jesus' yoke light? It is light because this is the only way life works, the only lifestyle that actually produces ongoing satisfaction and well-being (Osborne, 446). It's not light because it requires no effort. Following Jesus requires plenty of effort, determination and grit. And it's worth it.

Father God, it is strange to be giving thanks for your wrath and for the day of judgement. But oh, the hope of a time without the blue plastic, without the sin, shame, evil, Satan, wow, what a day. So thank you for this hope. Thank you for the life that you offer us now. Thank you for the rest you offer us now. Please give us courage to live for you. And Holy Spirit please help us in our walk with Jesus, please sustain us, enthuse us. Amen.

Benediction

Micah 6:8

8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Jesus. Amen.