

The Art of Living Lightly
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Text: Matthew 11:25-28 NIV

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 was your good pleasure.

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.”

Intro: How do you feel when someone says, “You look exhausted!”

Maybe a mix of emotions, embarrassment AND pride? Exhaustion is badge of honor in our culture.

When my pastoral colleagues and I talk about our congregations, one word that comes up is “exhausted.” Meeting the demands of careers and family is hard enough. Then add church!

In our scripture today, Jesus makes it clear: This is not how life is supposed to be. This is not what God wants from us, or for us.

The four invitations:

COME to me is a powerful invitation, but does require a turning away from the compulsive, distracted lives we lead.

Brene Brown: It takes courage to say yes to rest & play in a culture where exhaustion is seen as a status symbol.

TAKE my yoke. This was an image Jesus’ hearers would know well. Jewish people spoke of carrying the yoke of God’s law and yoke of his Kingdom. It is a call to entrusting ourselves to Jesus, to submitting to his rule and rhythm of life. It is a call to a radical obedience. And it takes courage, as Brene Brown points out, to say yes to rest & play in a culture where exhaustion is

seen as a status symbol.

11:29–30. When a man carried a yoke he would carry it on his shoulders (cf., e.g., Jer 27:2); Judaism applied this image of subjection to obedience. Jewish people spoke of carrying the yoke of God’s law and the yoke of his kingdom, which one accepted by acknowledging that God was one and by keeping his commandments. Matthew intends Jesus’ words about rest as a contrast with Pharisaic sabbath rules in the following passage (12:1–14): the promise of “rest for your souls” comes from Jeremiah 6:16, where God promises to stay his wrath if the people turn to him instead of to the words of the false religious leaders (6:13–14, 20).^[1]

LEARN from me.

The image that comes to mind is a two oxen being yoked together to pull a plow, or two horses being harnessed together to pull a wagon. Jesus companions us in our learning, inviting us to walk alongside him to learn to live as he does.

FIND rest. This is more than taking a day off, or taking regular vacations though stopping work is definitively a big part of it.

Joy Clarkson on twitter: This is your gentle reminder that one time in the Bible Elijah was like, “God, I’m so mad! I want to die!” so God said, “Here’s some food. Why don’t get some sleep?” So Elijah slept, ate, & decided things weren’t so bad after all. Never underestimate the spiritual power of a nap & a snack.

We are so conditioned to define ourselves based on being productive, high performing, manifesting excellence, and winning that it can be really hard to hear this invitation for what it is. It’s far too easy to hear this as invitation to a life of leisure, or laziness, laissez-faire. But that is not it at all. It is a call to live lightly.

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[1] Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Mt 11:29–30). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.