

“Come to Me”

(Some thoughts with Dr. Joel Crichlow)

The word “come” can be viewed as a command or an invitation. Any operative meaning that can be associated with the word “come” depends on who speaks the word and the context in which that word is spoken.

If we are under some authority it is usual to receive the command “come” from the one in authority over us. If we are guilty of something then hearing that command “come” may drive some fear into our heart. On the other hand we may have always longed to be part of a team, to spend some time with someone we consider special, to be offered a job, to receive a gift or a helping hand. Then we hear that “come”. It is an invitation that stirs our heart with joy.

“Come to me” demands a reaction. Once we hear it directed at us, we have to process it and respond. Whether it is a command or an invitation there are really only two ways in which to respond. If it is a command we either obey or disobey. If it is an invitation we either accept or refuse.

Processing that “come” involves a few considerations. Who said “come”? “Come” for what? What are the consequences of obeying or accepting? What are the consequences of disobeying or refusing? Are we willing to enjoy or suffer those consequences? How much time do we have to make a decision?

In Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV) Jesus says “Come to me”:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

God (Father, Son Jesus, Holy Spirit) is our ultimate authority. Therefore He has the right to command us at His pleasing. However, in this scripture it does not sound like “come” the command. It sounds rather like “come” the invitation. Jesus invites the weary and burdened to receive the gift of His yoke, which will lead to our finding rest for our souls.

The description “weary and burdened” relates to our soul, not the physical body. The “soul” here is a reference to our mind – the seat of our thoughts and emotions. Should we accept this “come to me” invitation?

First of all, we cannot get an invitation from any higher authority than our creator, Jesus Christ. Therefore, it would be foolish of us not to give it serious consideration. Secondly, why the use of the word “yoke”? In farming cultures heavy ploughs are drawn by a pair of strong animals (usually oxen) in order to accomplish the laborious task of ploughing the fields. What controls the pair of oxen is a cross-beam across their necks attached in such a way as to keep the pair of oxen linked together. That contraption that links the oxen by way of their necks is called a yoke. It is an instrument of control.

The implication in Jesus' invitation is that we are weary and burdened in our souls as a result of who or what is controlling us. If we are not voluntarily under the control of Jesus we are directly or indirectly under the control of our enemy, Satan. Satan leads us along a path of rebellion against God. A path that leaves us weary, burdened and eventually eternally separated from God.

On the other hand, if we place ourselves under the control of Jesus (i.e. we take His yoke upon us) he gives us the guarantee that in His gentle and humble way He will teach and guide us along the path of life that is accompanied by rest for our souls. This "rest" is expressed by the Apostle Paul as "*the peace of God, which transcends all understanding*", Philippians 4: 7 (NIV).

The positive consequence of accepting the "Come to me" invitation from Jesus cannot be surpassed. We would be foolish not to accept it. John the Baptist, whose ministry was to prepare the way for Jesus, emphasized the reason why we should not refuse Jesus' invitation. Speaking of Jesus, John the Baptist said: "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" John 1: 29 (NIV). Jesus bore the penalty of our sin so that whosoever believes in Him shall have forgiveness of sins, rest for our soul, peace with God, eternal life, (see John 3: 16).

However, "rest for our soul" does not mean freedom from every earthly challenge. There are several examples of dear followers of Jesus whose lives demonstrate that serious earthly challenges can attend the way of the believer in Jesus. We just quoted John the Baptist so we will use him as an example.

John's ministry earned him the wrath of Herod Antipas, the governing authority in Galilee, leading to John's imprisonment and subsequent beheading (see Matthew 14). In Matthew 11: 2-3 (NIV) it states:

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Did John begin to question the belief that he had so clearly confessed before? It looks like that. Our challenges may cause us to question. But tell it to Jesus. He is able to reassure us as He did for John.

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor", Matthew 11:4-5 (NIV).

When we come to Jesus we can be confident that He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion (see Philippians 1: 6). Jesus is able; and He says "*Whoever has ears, let them hear*", Matthew 11:15 (NIV). Have we heard the "Come to me"? How will we respond?

Responding positively to the call of Jesus begins the journey of a fulfilling life. A life of rest in our souls and peace with God, and all along the way getting to know our creator in a most rewarding and enriching way as Jesus reveals the Father to us. Jesus has said in Matthew 11:27 (NIV):

"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".

Jesus continues to say even at this present time: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* Matthew 11: 28-30 (NIV).