

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:25) Some of the more familiar, and comforting, words of Scripture. Perhaps because I read these in such close proximity to the 4th of July, our “Independence Day,” another familiar phrase entered my mind: *“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”* This is, of course, the most famous line from the poem “New Colossus,” written by Emma Lazarus, which has become almost as well known as the statue it adorns, The Statue of Liberty. Both of these iconic works have become ‘lightning rods,’ if you will, for ONE of our current ‘hot button’ issues, immigration.

Which is NOT going to be OUR subject for today. 😊 As a side note, tho,’ speaking of Lady Liberty, while that ‘monument’ has become SO intertwined with the subject of immigration, that was NOT what *prompted* its generous gift by the French (including work done by some guy named ‘Eiffel’); it was given to commemorate both **friendship** and **freedom**. And with regards to the latter, particularly the freedom won in the American Civil War. Yet another ‘hot topic’ we will not be considering...

Today’s message DOES, however, yet have to do with the subject of ‘servant hood.’ How we are called to serve God. Called BY a servant... Jesus... to BE a servant of others. Not in a human interpretation, but in a DIVINE one. And as we consider how Jesus ‘calls’ us as His own, we will also consider the inseparable other half to God’s ‘equation’ of our lives in Him: how we, after being ‘called,’ are then to be ‘sent.’ What we are to DO in response to Jesus’ invitation to “Come, Take, Learn.”

We will start with the manner in which God CALLS us to Himself, particularly in the person of Jesus Christ. First, Jesus calls us to **COME** to Him.

Those words that I began this message with: ***“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”*** (Matt. 11:25)

Along with such rich, powerful passages like *John 3:16* and *Psalms 23*, this ranks up there as some of the most encouraging words of Scripture. Jesus speaking with compassion and concern, inviting ALL who are weary and tired, carrying heavy burdens, to COME to Him, promising that He WILL give them rest. Is there anyone hearing my voice today that is NOT ‘weary,’ and ‘carrying heavy burdens?’ Financial burdens. Physical burdens. Emotional burdens. Spiritual burdens. Who among us has not grown just a little ‘weary’ of the trials and tribulations of our current day world? The ‘bombardment’ we have on multimedia of reporting and commentary on subjects ranging from pandemic to politics, from social unrest to physical suffering.

I recall a popular phrase back in my younger years: **‘Kill your TV.’** Sometimes I think that we might want to bring that back and expand it a bit, to include, if you will, our ‘screens of many colors,’ to borrow from the Biblical character Joseph. Now I know that with our need for distancing these days, we have had to rely so much more on electronic media to communicate with one another. But how does our time on the ‘world-wide web’ inhibit our time with another **‘www’**: our ‘Wonderfully-Wise Waymaker,’ Jesus Christ?

I came across this ‘ancient’ quote relative to TV’s that I think could be expanded to include MANY of our distractions that take us away from personal interaction with our Lord. As most of you likely remember, there was a popular pop artist back in the 60’s /70’s named Andy Warhol, who said that *“When I got*

my first television set, I stopped caring so much about having close relationships.”

OUCH. This all-true statement, into which one might substitute iPhone/iPad/laptop, can relate to both human relationships and Divine ones as well. To build close relationships with God and man requires TIME... uninterrupted, quiet, quality time. In the midst of our hurried, harried lives, weary and burdened, our Lord whispers to us through the ‘distractions,’ **“COME TO ME... AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.”**

As we ‘come’ to be with Jesus, He then asks us to **“TAKE.”** Jesus says for those who will come to Him to **“Take my yoke upon you.”** (Matt. 11:29) Now, that word ‘yoke’ is not one we use too often. As you likely know (very) well, it is that wooden frame that would connect two animals to work together to pull a heavy load, as a plow or wagon. Unfortunately, the connotation that comes to mind most readily for me is in the phrase “the yoke of slavery.” One of those ‘issues’ I mentioned earlier that is such a source of great pain and longsuffering, particularly now.

But instead of speaking of the manner in which heavy burdens are carried, at great cost and hardship, Jesus goes on to say that **“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”** (Matt. 11:30) Is he saying that to take on the ‘yoke,’ the mantle of leadership and ‘membership’ in the body of Christ, as a follower of His, it’s going to be ‘easy?’ An identity that we can take ‘lightly?’ I don’t think so.

But if we consider other words used for that term **“easy”**... ‘kind’ or ‘good’... and another synonym for **“light”**... ‘small’... it might help to put into a different perspective. That as we take on that yoke, that ‘framework’ that ‘connects’ two in working together as one, our burdens will change. That with Jesus by our side, what we do together becomes more ‘kind’, more ‘good’... our

struggle becomes much more 'small.' As we 'take on' the tasks that are more in line with **GOD's will** for our lives... and less of our own burdens... we will realize the truth of Christ' promise: ***"You will find rest for your souls."*** (Matt. 11:30)

That coming to 'take His yoke upon us' doesn't come easily, or simply. It will require us to **LEARN**. Jesus says to his faithful ones, ***"Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart."*** (Matt. 11:29) If we are to 'enter into the rest' of our Lord, we must 'learn' about how to REMAIN there. If we want to be more like Jesus, that gentle and humble-hearted friend and Savior, we must continue to GROW in our wisdom and stature before the Lord. You might consider some big theological terms "Justification" and "Sanctification." We are 'justified,' made 'right' with God, just once, when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior. Then begins the life-long learning process of being 'sanctified.' To continue each and every day to be 'make holy,' striving to 'be more like Jesus.' Where he asks us each day to ***"learn from me."*** As long as, of course, we don't get too 'distracted.'

Which reminds me of another quote I read from an even more 'ancient philosopher,' comedian Groucho Marx. He was around way back when they only had *black-and-white TV's!* (No, really! Look him up!) He once commented that *"I find televisions quite educational. Every time someone turns on the set, I go in the other room and read a book."* OK, perhaps a little extreme, but it does remind us of the importance of the mental stimulation of **READING** books. Particularly 'THE Book.' Reading provides us a higher level of stimulation for our mind than we could ever get strictly with our eyes. As we take that dreaded four-letter word... 'T-I-M-E'... to be in the Word, we will find that God speaks to us through the Spirit. NOT because we are so, in Jesus' earlier words, ***"wise and intelligent"***... but rather, when we come before Him as 'children'... spiritual

'infants' who are dependent on our Heavenly Father for our nourishment and protection. As we **listen** to the Word and Spirit, we will LEARN. And come to appreciate the truth of Jesus' words: **>> "You will find rest for your souls."** (Matthew 11:30)

As you and I seek to find rest for our weary souls, and relief from our daily burdens, may we remember these 'simple' commands of Jesus: 'COME to me.' 'TAKE up my will' for your life. 'LEARN from me.' But you might recall I said that this was just the first part of the equation. First, to be **called** TO Christ. And then, two, to be **sent out** BY Christ. And so I would leave you with the other side of our 'coin of faith.' Jesus closes out this Gospel by telling His disciples by saying to **"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."** (Matthew 28:19-20)

In the same way that Jesus beckons the weary to 'COME,' he also exhorts the strengthened to 'GO.' Just as He asks the saved to 'TAKE' up his burdens, our Lord also tells the 'sanctified' to 'MAKE' more disciples. And for all that we LEARN from our Teacher, He commands us to, in turn, 'TEACH' others to obey everything He has commanded. So, there you have it. The Christian life in 6 words: 'Come' and 'Go.' 'Take' and 'Make.' 'Learn' and 'Teach.' Simple, right? Not so much. How can we do it? What were Jesus' last words before ascending into heaven?

"Lo, I am with you always, to the very end of time." (Matt. 28:20)

And for THAT declaration, I believe that ALL God's children can say, 'AMEN!'

CHARGE: The closing lines to that poem I mentioned earlier inscribed on the Statue of Liberty are also likely familiar: *“Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me; I lift my lamp besides the golden door.”* These words were written by a Jewish woman particularly for those seeking new life and hope in a land of freedom. As followers of the son of a Jewish carpenter, perhaps these words might apply to our Christian calling as well. That just as Jesus came to ‘seek and save the lost,’ may we too send those ‘homeless, tempest-tossed’ to Him: the One who offers new life...living hope... true freedom. May God lift up the lamp of your life to shine the way to the Golden Door of heaven, through Jesus, the Light of the world. As you go forth to ‘bear His light,’ know that you do NOT go alone...