



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 11:20–30

Gospel of Matthew

“The Unshared Sonship of the Son of God”

TRANSCRIPT

The Scripture reading is again, today, in the Gospel of Matthew. This time, chapter 11 verse 20 through verse 30. Chapter 11 verse 20 through verse 30. Now, the Lord Jesus has spoken very strongly and penetratingly of the perversity of the generation to which he had come, and now in the 20th verse, a note begins to appear that has not appeared in its severity until now. And it is the note of the knowledge of our Lord of the rejection of his ministry by the great mass of the leaders of the nation.

“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: ‘Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.’”

There is a very interesting point about this verse, the 23rd, because the texts here seem to clearly read, not, “And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to Hades.” Something like this, “You will not be exalted to heaven, will you, Capernaum?” And the idea lying back of it is a reference to the statements in Isaiah chapter 14 verse 13 and verse 15 of the pride of Satan. And so, Capernaum is accused in these words, implicitly, of spiritual pride. And, it likened in their rejection to the Lord to the activity of Satan when he said that he would be like the Most High.

“But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.’ At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

The subject for today is “The Unshared Sonship of the Son of God.” One of the most renowned New Testament professors of contemporary times has been the British scholar, Vincent Taylor. In one of his works, he has said, “A filial relationship with the Father, to which there is parallel nowhere else, is the secret of the ministry and work of Jesus.” That is the real foundation of the remarkable claim that Jesus Christ makes when he says, “All things are delivered unto me by my

Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father except the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him.”

The depth and the breadth of that statement is staggering. He claims to be the sole mediator of the knowledge of God. Think of it. No one knows God apart from Jesus Christ. He is the only one who introduces us to the knowledge of God. Unique, solitary and supreme is the status of the Son of God. And what a bomb that claim should be for our times, characterized as it is by restlessness and weariness, by ludicrous thrashing about by the worldlings, strewing tennis balls over the landscape and looking for meaning in life from the patent medicines of the soul that are supplied by religious hucksters.

There was a lengthy article that appeared in one of our daily newspapers. It’s a remarkable article, because it manifests a depth of spiritual discernment that one does not ordinarily find in a professor. This article, which I noticed and cut out, evidently impressed some of you because some of you have come to me with copies of it, asking me to read it.

It’s written by Mr. Irving Kristol. The title of this particular article was, “Of Decadence and Tennis Flannels,” and let me offer a preamble to what follows. Mr. Kristol does not attack the game of tennis per se. He admits that it is popular, and it does, I think, characterize our age to some extent. And then Mr. Kristol begins to discuss the American scene from the standpoint of its religion and life-style. He says, “The bourgeois ethos—a pretty sure guide to worldly success—has always assumed that our religious traditions would provide the answer to that non-bourgeois question, but it did not foresee that religion itself would become incorporated into the worldly efforts to better our condition and would redefine its task either as social reform or as providing us with a healthy and happy lifestyle. The popular phrase, life-style, is of crucial significance.”

He goes on to speak about those Americans who no longer need concern themselves with acquiring the necessities of a comfortable life now shop for the meaning of that life in a vast and variegated cultural supermarket. This is what the pursuit of happiness has sunk to: a ludicrous parody of capitalism in which we consume in succession all possible brands of pie in the sky.

Then he launches into an attack on some of the ideas that have appeared in some of our weeklies, such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. For example, there was a success story of one of the chicken entrepreneurs by the name of Frank Perdue, and the writer of the article in *Time* magazine said, “Down to earth, though he may appear on television, Frank Perdue is no bumpkin. He wears Gucci loafers and drives a blue Mercedes, lives in a condominium in Ocean City, Maryland (he and his wife recently separated), and plays a plucky game of tennis when he can.”

“This is middle America?” Mr. Kristol asks. “Where, O where are the bumpkins of yesteryear? If one is to believe that same issue of *Time*, with its cover story on sex and tennis, they’re all out on the tennis court with Mr. Perdue playing a plucky and soul-shattering game of tennis.”

Then speaking about tennis, he goes on to say that, “If *Time* is to be believed, however, it’s tennis balls that will be strewn over the desolate landscape. In and of itself, no doubt, tennis is a pleasant enough diversion. But according to *Time*, tennis, especially in the form of mixed doubles, has now become, first, a mating game; second, a divorcing game; third, a quasi-religious ritual; fourth, an active form of self-analysis, in which the players discover some terribly important truths about themselves. There is Freudian tennis, Zen tennis, women’s lib tennis, Yoga tennis, tennis for divorcees, marriage counseling tennis, etc., etc.”

Well, he goes on to say that *Newsweek* also, at the same time, in its cover story in which its title was “Getting your Head Together.” It was a report on the consciousness revolution, solemnly described by the author as just possibly “this country’s version of Colonial America’s Great Awakening.” And then Mr. Kristol says, in parentheses, “May God have mercy on the author of those lines.” [Laughter]

This consciousness revolution, one is told, is a religion without a creed; a catalyst for new lifestyles; a tournament of therapies. In short, millions of spiritually sick people are shopping around for patent medicines of the soul. And since demand creates supply, there are thousands of hucksters, some by now successful entrepreneurs, others just scraping along, who promote their specially-prepared compounds of theosophy, psycho-analysis, sexual liberation and amateur nihilism.

Thus, we are being offered, for whatever price the market can bear, bioenergetics, guided-fantasy, primal scream, EST, loamy bodywork (whatever that is; I don't know, I'm not really in that [laughter] very much), nude marathon, and every other variety of intellectual rubbish that the demi-educated, when thrown back on their resources mistake for spiritual nourishment.

None of this, of course, has anything to do with religion. Religion is not a kind of therapy. And while its consolations are real, they don't necessarily make you feel good. All authentic religions provide authoritative information on how to be good and take true happiness to be a consequence of virtue, not vice versa. And I know of no religion that subscribes to the two doctrines which, as *Newsweek* puts it, are common to all these modish cults: the innate goodness of man and the inevitability of human progress. “It is the acceptance of those two doctrines that permit our bored middle-class psychonauts to navigate through inner space with a sublime confidence that they will discover and be reconciled to their authentic selves.”

Now it appears to me that Mr. Kristol has hit upon something that is very important, and it is this. That our society is a society that is restless, weary, looking for something all about them, possibly in them, but not knowing the true source of peace and rest.

They're like a man who has a fever, and who is lying upon his bed. And he discovers, of course, as he lies upon his bed, that wherever he puts his head, it suddenly becomes hot and uncomfortable. And so his search for rest and calm is much the tossing of a fever-stricken man. He rolls from side to side. He constantly changes his pillow. He thinks that the fever is to be found in the bed and in the sheets, and forgets that the fever is in him. When he lays his head upon the coolness of a new spot on the pillow, he puts a fevered head upon the pillow. No tossing, no turning, no thrashing about will help. And the same thing is true of the restlessness of our age.

Men cannot be helped until the being within them is changed, and men cannot be driven out of their sense of restlessness and weariness until they realize that there is no hope in any of these thrashings about that they are trying. To put it in the language of a preacher, as Dr. M. R. DeHaan used to say, “You have to get a man lost before you can get him saved.” And how true that is. Until

we come to understand our lost condition, we will not flee to the true remedy which is the Lord Jesus.

The rest that is promised by the Lord Jesus is grounded in the knowledge of God. And only he can give it, so he claims. William Watson was discussing poets one day. He spoke about Shakespeare, he spoke about Byron. He spoke about Shelley, he spoke about Keats. He spoke about Coleridge, and he spoke about the strong points of each of them. And then he said that William Wordsworth didn't have either of these strong points, and how can you account for his greatness? Finally, he put it this way. He said, “Mr. Wordsworth had, for weary feet the gift of rest.” Now there is a gift of rest greater than anything Wordsworth could give, and that is the rest that the Lord Jesus offers and gives.

Before we come to these verses here which, I think are the heart of this section, let me make a few comments about his denunciation of the unrepentant cities, the description of which is given in verses 20 through 24. He has spoken very penetratingly of the generation's perversity, and so he turns now to the cities. And he began to upbraid the cities in which most of his mighty works were done because they repented not.

Incidentally, we notice that in this text, in which he pronounces woes upon Chorazin and Bethsaida, that he speaks about mighty works being performed in these cities. And yet, there is no record in Matthew or in Mark or Luke or John of mighty works being performed in Chorazin, or of this Bethsaida which probably was located near Capernaum. Now that's an amazing thing when you think about it.

John, I think, speaks about this when he writes in his Gospel that, as he concludes it he says, “Now, what we have given you in our Gospel is a selection of things that Jesus did. He did many more things than this.” And then he adds, “I suppose if we were to attempt to put into books all that Jesus said and did, even the world itself could not contain them.” And this is one of the proofs of the truthfulness of that statement. The Lord Jesus performed many mighty works which are not recorded in our Bible at all. That means that when we read the biographies of the Lord Jesus (if we

could call them that; they are really Gospels), when we read these Gospels, we have only a selection of the mighty things that the Lord Jesus did. We do not have a complete account.

Now when he begins to upbraid these cities—Matthew begins with a little word, then; “Then began he to upbraid the cities”—the Lord Jesus launches into a kind of message that he has not been giving up to this point. It is the message of judgment, and this message will go stronger and stronger as the Gospel proceeds. We shall see in just a few weeks, when we get to the 13th chapter that he says that this generation that is listening to him, that has failed to respond to him, is a “hopeless generation.” And now he speaks in parables in order that they might see and not see, not understand.

So he pronounces retributive judgment upon them, judgment that will reach its climax ultimately and finally in the lake of fire. What kind of sin did they commit? He says, simply, that “they repented not.” He does not say that their sin was sensuality. He does not say that their sin was moral filth. So far as we can tell, their sin existed in the fact that they were indifferent to the claims of the Lord Jesus, lethargic in responding to the message that he gave.

You see, the sins of immorality, the sins of moral filth, the sins of adultery, the sins of fornication—all of these things are the product of a basic attitude toward God that draws down upon the one who has it the condemnation of retributive judgment. The cities repented not. They didn’t fight him. They didn’t attack him. But they just did not believe in him.

And then he adds, also, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon—and in a moment, more tolerable for Sodom, that wicked city!—than for the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. And evidently, the background of that is that because of the greater privilege of these cities in which the Lord Jesus had ministered himself, they shall have greater judgment. And even those wicked cities of Sodom and Tyre and Sidon shall escape the kind of judgment that Capernaum and its sister cities experienced.

Now, there is an interesting question here that I think I ought to raise. And the question is, if Tyre and Sidon would have repented, had the miracles done in Chorazin and Bethsaida been done

there, then why were Tyre and Sidon not given these blessings? That’s a kind of question that we don’t like to try to answer. If it is true that they would have repented, why did they not have adequate opportunity?

Now I admit that this is a difficult question to answer. We could say, of course, that the Messiah had not come yet, and since he had not yet become incarnate, the mighty works that he did would not be possible to have been committed there. But nevertheless, there were prophets in the Old Testament who did perform mighty works. Witness, Elijah and Elisha. So, why were not some mighty divine works done there?

The final analysis, we must admit, that the secret things belong unto the Lord, and those things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever that we may do all of the words of this law. And in this case, the question is more embarrassing for the Arminian than it is for the Calvinist. For the Arminian believes that God works in accordance with common sense, and one can understand God very easily if he has common sense. Someone has said, Arminianism is the religion of common sense, but Calvinism is the religion of St. Paul. That’s a little unfair to the Arminians, because they do think that their doctrine is St. Paul’s.

But the question is very hard for common sense. If Tyre and Sidon would have repented, and if Sodom would have repented, then why did they not have opportunity? And I don’t think anyone can answer that who does not believe in the sovereign grace of God. And if the question remains, it’s a question that we shall find ultimate answer upon when we get to heaven. But we can be sure that so far as God is concerned, he has stated plainly in his Word that he “hardens who he wills and he exercises mercy on who he wills.” These are the words of God. And if we don’t like them, if we thrash about seeking to escape their force, then our argument is not with men. Our argument is ultimately with the Word of God.

Now that’s an introduction to the major part of this passage, and that is our Lord’s appreciation of divine revelation. When we come to verse 35, we have what has been called the great thanksgiving. “At that time Jesus answered and said (in prayer to God), ‘I thank thee, O Father, Lord

of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”

The context to this statement is not so plain in the Gospel of Matthew as it is in the Gospel of Luke. There, the Lord Jesus had sent out seventy to preach the Word. And finally the seventy had come back, and they had said that even the spirits are subject to them. And in the light of their wonderful success, the Lord Jesus, who had been in his human nature bitterly disappointed (if we may understand Isaiah 49 in that sense) by the refusal of the learned and influential, now rejoices in the report that the men give of the success of their ministry.

Now he speaks of great things—or these things, I should say—“because thou hast hidden these things, O Lord, from the wise and prudent, I give Thee thanks.” What are these things? Well, in the context, he’s speaking about his mighty works that proclaim his messianic identity. And so he rejoices over the fact that in the presence of the gift of his mighty works in order to show men that he is the Messiah, some have not responded and some have responded. And he gives thanks to God for both the rejection and the acceptance.

Now, he also says that he is thankful that he has “revealed them unto babes.” That gives us an insight into what he means by the wise and prudent. What is characteristic of a baby? Well the one characteristic of a baby is its dependence. When a baby is born, that is the one thing that characterizes it. I know that when that little baby is seen for the first time you think, “Oh how cute.” But everything about a newborn baby is an objection to the society into which he has been brought. Physically and vocally he is protesting. Every baby ever born is protesting.

Now, I know that some scientists in France have suggested that one of the reasons for this is that babies are always born in light, and they ought to be born in darkness. And if they were born in darkness, they would not shout and scream as they do. It’s because they don’t like the light.

Well, that’s not really the reason, of course. Why, they come into this atmosphere of ours with hands clenched and feet expressing the same kind of objection and making it known that they

don't like it. But in spite of all of that, they're dependent. Nothing is more dependent than a human baby. It could not possibly live of itself. Totally dependent.

Now when the Lord Jesus speaks of those to whom the truth has been revealed as babes, he stresses the fact that the truth of God is revealed to those who are dependent on God for the knowledge of the truth. Therefore, if I may take that as one side of the opposition, the wise and prudent, then there are those who take confidence, find confidence in themselves—in their wisdom, in their understanding, in their capacities, in their talents—whatever it may be, they are the self-confident. And to these, these things have been hidden.

Now this illustrates the fact that the heart, not the head, is the home of the gospel. But we do not mean the heart apart from the mind. We must know in order to receive, but there is something else besides the knowledge of our minds necessary.

Now the second thing the Lord Jesus speaks about in the 26th verse is the Father's sovereign grace in revelation. “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Now, the Father, evidently, has delighted in his plan. And that plan has included, on the one hand, the sin of men, and on the other hand, the salvation of men. And the Lord Jesus rejoices in it. Now I think we have an illustration here of we should respond to divine truth. The Lord Jesus, in spite of the difficulty of the hiding of truth from the wise and influential, expresses his thanksgiving to God. He rests in the will of God. Besides in its most vocal expression—I think in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the midst of the struggle that issues in Calvary, he cries out, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.”

If a person's truest thoughts are revealed in prayer—I think that's true in private prayer—then this is a precious, spiritual point of autobiography of the Lord Jesus. In the midst of his petitions as the Son of Man, he offers thanksgiving to God for all that he knows to be of God and expresses his obedience to the Father's will. What a beautiful illustration. The obedient Messiah is for believers who may not understand everything in the Word of God but who know that true happiness and true deliverance comes from obedience produced by God the Holy Spirit.

Well now everything leads up to the 27th verse, because this is one of the great texts of the Word of God. It's added as if it were sunk in a beatific soliloquy, someone has said. And he speaks of the way of the revelation of the knowledge of God. “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, except the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”

This text is so remarkable that New Testament scholars have wrestled with it, and some have fought to deny its genuineness. Some have said it is not genuine because it has a distinctly Johannine ring about it. It is a legitimate canon of biblical criticism that any synoptic saying which has a parallel in John must, *ipso facto*, be spurious. It is that if we have something in the Gospel of Matthew which is like that in the Gospel of John, we must say that that in the Gospel of Matthew, because it is like that in the Gospel of John, has not really been written by the Gospel writers as a true statement of the Lord Jesus? I don't know of any Gospel canon criticism like that.

As a matter of fact, it can be argued that this text is really not exactly like that in John anyway, though it does create the impression that it is the same kind of theology that one finds in the Gospel of John. One of our greatest and most noted New Testament scholars, Joachim Jaremas, Professor of New Testament at the University of Goettingen in Germany, has said that “If this is not a genuine statement of the Lord Jesus, then the Johannine theology expressed in the Gospel of John would become a total mystery to us, because we could not attain the mystery of truth which is, in so many ways, different in flavor from that of Matthew, Mark and Luke.”

Anyone who reads the Bible notices that John is different in that respect. But there are these statements that do appear in other Gospels that show that what we have in Matthew, Mark and Luke is one tradition that comes from the words of Jesus, and the other, in the Gospel of John, is another tradition which also finds its origin in our Lord Jesus Christ's own words.

Now, of course, generally speaking, people who want to deny the genuineness and authenticity of this statement, also want to deny the far-reaching claims of it. And there are some far-reaching claims. Some say, for example, that the Lord Jesus, here, is simply claiming lordship and

government over the universe. That would be very broad, and I would agree that is involved here. But others like to say that what he’s really saying is simply that he has control of all things essential to his messianic work, trying to limit it. Or, that they express the claim that his doctrine comes from God, like any simple prophet might have said. Or, his fortunes are of divine appointment.

But we cannot escape like that. We cannot escape by trying to explain away the words, “All things are delivered unto me by my Father” as if my fortunes are of divine appointment, he guides my steps. For the very next phrase or two, clause or two, says, “No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son. In other words, he claims to have a knowledge of God the Father that is unique and solitary and pre-eminent and supreme. And furthermore, he claims that he controls all that knowledge as far as we are concerned. No man can know God except the Son wills that he know him.

So you see that in the very next clause or two, the minimum of meaning that must be given these phrases is that he is sovereign and supreme in the knowledge of God, and the impressiveness and parallel between the Father’s knowledge of the Son and the Son’s knowledge of the Father can escape no person who reads the Bible, pondering its words and looking for its depths of meaning.

This is such a great text that one German scholar, the great-grandfather of that tragic contemporary theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, said about it that “it was a fundable fallen from the Johannine sky. And a British scholar said, “No, it was a bolt from the Johannine blue.” They both are expressing the same thing.

But what does the text mean? Well, first of all, it says all things have been delivered to him. Now the context of chapter 11 suggests that what is meant by this is that since he has been speaking about, Matthew has, describing the miracles of the Lord Jesus, that all authority over nature, all authority over disease, all authority over death, all authority over Satan is in the hands of our Lord Jesus, and that is positively staggering to think that the Lord Jesus is that sovereign person.

Now someone says, “Oh, but I’m not sure it goes that far.” Did you notice the preceding verse? “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” That expression, “seemed good in Thy

sight,” involves the use of a term which, in the New Testament, is frequently associated with the divine predestination of all things. So it seemed good in thy sight. Why do you know what this means? This means that our Lord Jesus controls everything, that he is the Mediator of all the divine knowledge, and of all the divine activities, and all judgment has been committed into his hand. Even the saved and the lost belong to him. Amazing thing.

Now that leads up to those central statements in which he expresses his mutual intimacy with the Father, and what an incomparable expression of it this is. “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; (and then) neither knoweth any man the Father, (except) the Son.” Now let me ask you a question. If the Father is omniscient; if he knows everything. If he possesses omniscience—and the Son knows (incidentally, the word that is used is a word that expresses full and intimate and experiential knowledge) the Father fully—then what kind of knowledge does he have? Why, he has the knowledge of omniscience.

He could not know God, the omniscient God, fully, if he did not have that omniscience. To know God fully is to be God. That’s why you and I shall never know him fully. Oh we can know him really; but fully—that’s another matter. This is the greatest claim that the Lord Jesus ever made, some scholars say, and the only thing that makes it credible is the co-equality of essence that he experiences with the Father. The only way in which we can explain this is that it is rooted and grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity. That is why the doctrine of the Trinity is so important—one of the reasons.

And finally, he states in the last clause, “and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” You see what that means? Why that means that if you know God, it is because Jesus Christ has willed that you come to know God. Do you see what that means? That means that if you know God, it is entirely apart from any efforts on your part, but it has begun with the Lord Jesus Christ’s will that you know the Father. In other words, this text is a contributing text to the great doctrine that salvation is of the Lord. For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

And when you get to heaven, if you get there, and you start to boast, a good friend of mine who expounded the Scriptures said, “If you start to boast, the first thing the angels will do will be to throw you over the walls.” [Laughter] I wouldn’t like that. Reminds me of the stewardess who had a little child who was not doing too well, making a lot of noise and become a nuisance in the plane. And finally she walked over to him and said these withering words, “If you don’t shut up, I’m going to send you outside to play.” [Laughter]

Now having said this, coming to verse 28, we read, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden.” If the Lord Jesus Christ holds the secret of life, it’s no wonder that he bursts from his soliloquy with “Come unto me, and I will give you rest,” for there is no other person to whom we could come.

John, you know, had sent word, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” Here is the great and final answer to it. He is the Messiah, and he is the sole mediator of the knowledge of God, and if we should come to him, we shall have life and the knowledge of God. And if we do not come to him, we shall not have it.

Rejected by the cities, he turns to the Jews burdened under the yoke of the law. Incidentally, this is to be understood in the light of its context. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. He refers to the fact that the Jewish generation to which he was sent to minister was a generation that was under all the Levitical ceremonies which were, truly, a burden. And then, in addition, had placed upon their shoulders the additional human traditions of the Pharisees.

In the 23rd chapter he will speak about the Pharisees and will say that they bind burdens heavy to be borne, but they themselves wouldn’t bother to lift one of them up with their little fingers. And so the ones here who are labor and are heavy-laden are the Jews under the law. I wish I had time here to go into detail over this, but it is true that a Jew who attempted to keep the Mosaic law in all of its particulars did find the law—even the biblical law—to be a burden in many ways. I speak of the Levitical side of it with the cultists.

Now, the consequences of the coming are expressed with, “I will give you rest.” Conscious of universal power is the Lord Jesus. “I will give you rest.” You don’t have to run after bioenergetics or loamy bodywork or whatever it might be [laughter], I am able to give you rest. Now, the rest is that of the messianic kingdom, for that is what he is speaking about, but that may be enjoyed now and in anticipation of that messianic kingdom that is to come.

Now there is a remarkable thing here in the last three verses that I want to note before we close. There are, actually, two invitations here. Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden and I will give you rest. “Take my yoke upon you.” Come to me, throw off your yoke, then take my yoke upon you. Both invitations promise rest. Come unto me, I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you; you shall find rest. In other words, you shall have rest if you throw away your burdens, you’ll have rest if you take my burden.

Now that’s an amazing statement, really. You see, by losing a burden, we shall find rest, and by gaining his burden we shall also find rest. That seems strange. Throw away your burden of the law, and all that it means, and come to me, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Yoke was the special term that they used for the law; that’s why Paul says, “Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage”—the law.

It’s amazing that he should say, “Throw away your burden, and you shall be free by coming to me and taking up my burden, my yoke.” But you see, all of this presupposes that there is a change of nature. And when a person has the change of nature that we call the new birth, the yoke of our Lord Jesus is not really a burden, but as Augustine liked to use to say, it is like the wings of a bird which enable him to fly. They’re not his burden, they’re the things that enable him to go. And so the relationship to the Lord Jesus, and submission to him, is not a burden for the Christian who has experienced the new birth, they are the things that make him joyous and happy and enable him to live and have rest.

Do you get the point? We were made for the freedom of submission to the Lord Jesus. That’s why it’s freedom to be under his yoke. There is the story of a little boy which I like. It’s a very

familiar old story; all preachers know the story. A little boy was carrying a still smaller boy on his back. The littlest boy was lame. A man said, “That’s a heavy burden for you to carry.”

“That’s no’a burden,” said the little Scottish boy. “That’s me wee brother.” And guided by love, the burdens of life are no longer burdens.

And in relationship to the Lord Jesus, the burdens of the yoke of the Lord Jesus are no burdens. They’re joys. And they make life worth living.

Unshared sonship and sovereign mediation of the knowledge of God are Jesus Christ’s alone. Other men are sons; he’s the Son. Notice how he speaks of himself as the Son. Sure, we’re sons of God, so are the angels sons of God, but there’s only one “The Son.” That’s the Lord Jesus. No mere man could have ever made the amazing statement like this. The wearied search for rest ends in the Lord Jesus. Come unto me—not, come hear a sermon. Not, come and observe the sacraments. Not, come and join the church. Not, come and do works or any of the other things, but come unto me, and I will give you.

That’s the gospel in four words. He doesn’t want you to give him anything. He wants to give you something. I will give—give—that means nothing is to be paid for it. I will give you rest. All he wants is our attention.

Augustine said, in perhaps his most famous utterance in the *Confessions*, “You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it shall rest in Thee.” Mr. Kristol was right. We are living in a decadent age. We are living in an age in which people are seeking rest in things which cannot produce rest, when the simplest source of rest is the Lord Jesus himself, who has offered an atonement by which sinners may find forgiveness of sins as they come to him.

If you’re in the audience this morning, and you have not come to him, we invite you to come, to recognize that the Lord Jesus has died for sinners and has put away the guilt of his saints. May God the Holy Spirit work in your heart, and may you come. And it’s very simple. It’s a decision between you and him. Those two pronouns; nothing else. Come unto me, and I will give you rest.

“The Unshared Sonship of the Son of God” by S. Lewis Johnson
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Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. I am meek and lowly of heart. May God help you to come.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We bow before Thee, Lord, with a sense of our own unworthiness, of our littleness, of our insignificance in the light of the greatness of the sole mediator of the knowledge of our great triune God. We praise Thee, we worship Thee.

Thou art truly great. Thou art alone great. We rejoice in all that Thou hast done, and O Father, we do plead that if there are some here who have not responded to him, may the Holy Spirit in their hearts at this very moment bring conviction of sin of indifference, of disregard of the name of God. Give faith, by regeneration, for the glory of Thy name and the glory of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.