

Coach House Church BEACONS

THE QUEST FOR REST

3RD JULY 2020

I wonder how you experience life – does it feel like a burden? Lots of people to please, lots of standards to keep, lots of things you've got to be, and to top it all off, you've got to try and please God as well. I think that life can feel like that sometimes.

As Christians, we'd like to think that we're not living under a burden and that we can escape that. But I think that the reality is that often we don't. Somewhere along the line, our lives become about pleasing others, or about fulfilling our own standards, and the little markers that we set up in our minds which will make us feel validated and will make us feel worthwhile.

I think we all do this to an extent, or if we don't, we react against it and we say 'I'm just going to be authentic' or 'I'm just going to be myself' and we choose to ignore the standards that we see set up all around us and say 'you know what, my life can't be fixed' or 'the problems in the world around me can't be fixed'. Both those attitudes lead us down the wrong route.

In the Bible Jesus says 'come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest'. I think that stands in opposition to a lot of our experiences. We often feel that God wants us to do so much, and it's very easy to read the bible as a list of 'dos' and 'don'ts' and it's easy to look at that and either think about all the areas where I'm succeeding and checking the boxes or to look at all these areas where I'm failing and not measuring up.

If you live like that, it's not the life giving way that Jesus would want any of us to live, because, at the centre, it ceases to become about relying on Jesus and in the end it becomes about what I can produce and what I can make of myself. It

Christianises the idea of the self-made man and this is completely the opposition of the way Jesus wants us to think about our lives.

Around that same passage in Matthew 11:25-29, Jesus praises God that he has not revealed himself and his truth to those who are wise and intelligent, but to children. This is very interesting because if he had revealed himself to the wise and intelligent, it would have validated their confidence in their own abilities and their own understanding of scriptures. He would be rewarding their self-sufficient attitude.

Instead he reveals himself to people of a childlike mentality. This is a mentality of openness. The opposite of the mentality where you think you have it all together and can live this successful righteous life. It is important to honour the former rather than the latter. We should honour in other people that childlike mentality which is openness to God, where we know we need him, recognising he is good, and that we're able to approach him confidently rather than stalling with all of our personal holdups.

The religious leaders of the day had overburdened people with heavy and cumbersome regulations and ways of getting to God. They missed the way of righteousness. They missed the point. Jesus doesn't intend for us to be like them. All of that revelation of who he is comes to us in a form of dependence and trust upon him, and in essence he reveals himself to us. Not for us in our own cleverness to discover him. That's not to speak against rational thinking, but to recognise its limitations, and our limitations, when it comes to knowing and following God.

The way of rest is to be able to trust in Jesus to work through us, and not to trust in our performance. That way, though it sounds countercultural, is the way that we find rest in our Christian lives. We no longer rely on our abilities but rely on God to do what he wants to do, and that way will bring us fullness of life. And it's a position of trust, because if God doesn't come through for us then nothing will change, and I think we really do fear that if our own efforts to keep ourselves righteous and tick all these boxes fails then we will go off the rails. But instead, entrusting ourselves to Jesus will give us the fullness of life that we are looking for.

When Jesus says 'take my yoke upon you' (Matthew 11:29) he's referring to the way that cattle used to plow fields with a wooden beam across their backs so that they would keep going in the same direction. Other parts of scripture reference this in

relation to burdens that are too heavy to be borne that are being placed upon people by their leaders. But Jesus says the opposite, that his 'yoke is easy and his burden is light'. And, that is what our experience of him should be like.

This passage speaks to me on many different levels and there's many directions that we could take our application of it. However I'll focus on the fact that it removes the need for pretence, and for pretending to be something we're not. Instead, Jesus promises to relieve us of our heavy burdens – burdens of trying to perform and trying to be something, something that we're not and something that we may never attain, and instead he will work in us and he will change us, he will make us into the people he wants us to be.

It's easy to become weary, with our own standards, and weary with the standards in the world around us. And that's okay because it's the natural way to feel and the way we probably should be feeling. This isn't to say that God won't make us righteous. It shows us where our trust should be, in believing in the source of our righteousness. That source is Jesus and it will come from him. It will not come by us trying harder and getting more and more frustrating because things in our lives aren't changing. The source is Jesus and it always has been. He has shown us the way to go and he will change us as we trust in him. It does not matter how far along you are with your faith in Jesus, it is attractive enough for us to look at his words and see that he promises us rest, and a different way from the way we have experienced life outside of him.

Resting in him is the reason why I have produced this beacon in this form. Usually my intention is to plan everything out very clearly and carefully and then say it. On this occasion he said 'just do it', and he will work through it. We have to just entrust our performances to him, however sprawling they might be and however imperfect they might be. He is the one who brings rest and is the one who does the work, as part of giving up on my self-reliance. It is a humbling experience because we are putting our trust in him and not ourselves.

I'd encourage you to do this too, and the process begins by recognising that he will relieve our burdens, and secondly by thinking 'how do I experience my faith?' Is it just a constant list of duties and burdens and things that feel heavy to me but I feel like I kind of have to do? Or is it joyful? Is it life giving? Is my heart changing? Is my love for God increasing? Is faith expressing itself in love towards other and towards God? I think these are the questions that we need to be asking ourselves.

I believe that as we entrust ourselves to God in everything we do, he will come through for us every single time.



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