

Pentecost VII: Matthew 11:25-30: Come unto Me

1. Read vss. 20-24. Jesus had favored the people in Galilee highly, in particular the citizens of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. There He had performed most of His miracles which proved that He was the Son of God and Savior of the world. There He had preached the Gospel of forgiveness of sins. But, they did not repent. Though Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom were very wicked and therefore were destroyed, on Judgment Day the guilt of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum will be greater than that of the three ancient cities. By the way, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were also destroyed. Only the rubble of Capernaum remains today though once a flourishing city on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.
2. Vs. 25: "On that occasion" of speaking such words of severe judgment on these three cities. They refused to repent, to acknowledge their guilt, to believe in the Christ. So, they would have to bear their guilt which He wanted to remove. ἀποκριθεὶς always denotes a response in one way or another. Here, in response to His own words in vss. 20-24. ἐξομολογούμαι "I thank, praise and publicly acknowledge." πᾶτερ, vocative case. Though men rejected Christ, God was still His Father. Jesus is very God of very God. κύριε, vocative case. Though men rejected Christ, God is still Lord. τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς, objective genitive. He created heaven and earth out of nothing, by His Word. And He is still Lord over all of creation. By the way, the evolutionists who deny the great miracle of the six-day creation are no less guilty than the arrogant people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, who rejected Christ and His miracles. He who denies the first article of the Creed also denies the second article. ὅτι "because". ταῦτα, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Note antithesis of ἔκρυψας and ἀπεκάλυψας. Also of σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν and νῆπιος. The absence of articles stresses their qualities. Read I Cor. 1:18-25 to make these words clear. Jesus is NOT saying that educated people will be lost and the uneducated will be saved. The σοφοί and the συνετοί are the impenitent who reject the invitation of the Gospel. The νῆπιος are the penitent whose only hope is the righteousness of Christ which is theirs by faith. Lenski aptly points out that no one is νῆπιος by nature. Only the Law of God can make a man νῆπιος, cause him to acknowledge that he is a lost and condemned creature. Such a person, whether educated or uneducated, is a fit subject for the Gospel. The "wise and prudent" listen to neither Law nor Gospel, like the people mentioned in vss. 20-24. Etymologically νῆπιος means what the Latin word *infans* means, "not speaking". He is guilty, knows it, and does not talk back to God but, like David, says: "If Thou Lord shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand?" I Jn. 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That describes the man who is νῆπιος. But the σοφοί καὶ συνετοί are described in I Jn. 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the Truth is not in us." These are the deluded people who know better than God, they think. Read Jn. 1:11-13 where the two groups are described.
3. Vs. 26: Jesus reasserts by saying ναὶ "yes". Again He addresses Him as Father. Jesus knows the εὐδοκία of the Father which is identical to that of Jesus. On εὐδοκία cf. Eph. 1:5.9; Phil. 2:13; II Thess. 1:11; Lk. 12:32; II Pet. 1:17. Jesus is by no means rejoicing in the fact that some will be lost. He is rejoicing in the fact that as God was well-pleased with His Son, this good pleasure is mine and for all men, without distinction. Furthermore, vs. 25 excludes every possibility of synergism. Man does not find God. Man does not make a decision to become a child of God. It is only by revelation through Jesus Christ. Jn. 1:18. When that revelation is rejected, God Himself conceals the revelation. God truly and seriously wants all men to be saved. Even the damned in hell were forgiven, justified, reconciled to God through Christ. But, they rejected it. That's the meaning of vss. 20-24.
4. Vs. 27: This vs. is noted three times in the *Book of Concord*. We quote the three passages: *FC*, *SD*,

Art. II, Free Will, Tappert 526.26: "Holy Scriptures ascribe conversion, faith in Christ, regeneration, renewal, and everything that belongs to its real beginning and completion in no way to the human powers of the natural free will, be it entirely or one-half or the least and tiniest part, but altogether and alone to the divine operation and the Holy Spirit, as the *Apology* declares (XVIII 7,8). To some extent reason and free will are able to lead an outwardly virtuous life. But to be born anew, to receive inwardly a new heart, mind, and spirit, is solely the work of the Holy Spirit." Many passages are then quoted, among them Mt. 11:27. *FC, SD*, Art. VIII, Person of Christ, Tappert 601.54-56: "The statement is, of course, correct and true that Christ's human nature in and by itself possesses all the created gifts which have been given to it. But these do not measure up to the majesty which the Scriptures, and the ancient Fathers on the basis of Scriptures, ascribe to the assumed human nature in Christ. For to give life, to execute all judgment, to have all authority in heaven and on earth, to have all things given into his hands, to have all things under his feet, to cleanse from sin, and so forth are not created gifts but divine and infinite qualities. Yet according to the statement of the Scriptures these properties have been given and communicated to the man Christ." Then, among other passages, Mt. 11:27 is quoted. *FC, SD*, Art. VIII, Person of Christ, Tappert 608.85: "From the moment that the deity and the humanity were united in one person this man, Mary's son, is and is called the almighty and everlasting God, who by virtue of the communicatio idiomatum has eternal power and has created and preserved everything because he is one person with the deity and is true God. Mt. 11:27." In this vs. no restriction can be placed on the word πάντα. μοι must mean the human nature of Christ because as God He already had everything. This man, Jesus, is true God. Now comes the second great fact introduced by καὶ. True, intimate knowledge of who God truly is, is limited to Father and Son. In the word υἱός the divinity of Jesus is clearly stated. But the God-man, the incarnate Christ, alone knows the Father. It is a mutual knowing. Now comes the third great fact introduced by the last καὶ "to whomever the Son wills to reveal Him." The word "whomever" does not denote restriction, in the sense that Jesus does not graciously will all to know. It is an open invitation. The point that Jesus is making is that "no one cometh unto the Father but by Me." By the way, the revelation of the Father by the Son creates the faith, not vice versa. All synergism is excluded. At the beginning of vs. 27 even creation is attributed to the human nature of Christ. At the end of the vs. the salvation of the sinner, in all respects, is likewise attributed to the human nature of Christ.

5. Vs. 28: In *TLH* we find five hymns based on this verse: 149, 277, 281, 456, 513. Furthermore this verse is referred to six times in the *Book of Concord*: *Apology*, Art. XII, Repentance, Tappert 187.44: "Christ says in Mt. 11:28: 'Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' There are two parts here. Labor and being heavy-laden mean contrition, anxiety, and the terrors of sin and death. To come to Christ means to believe that for his sake sins are forgiven. When we believe, the Holy Spirit quickens our hearts through the Word of Christ. There are, then, two chief parts here, contrition and faith. In Mk. 1:15 Christ says 'Repent, and believe in the Gospel.' In the first part he denounces our sins, in the latter part he consoles us and shows us the forgiveness of sins." --*Large Catechism*, Lord's Supper, Tappert 454.66-67: "In this sacrament he offers us all the treasures he brought from heaven for us, to which he most graciously invites us in other places as when he says in Mt. 11:28 'Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.' Surely it is a sin and a shame that, when he tenderly and faithfully summons and exhorts us to our highest and greatest good, we act so distantly toward it, neglecting it so long that we grow quite cold and callous and lose all desire and love for it." *FC*, Epitome, Art. XI, Election, Tappert 495.8: "This Christ calls all sinners to himself and promises them refreshment. He earnestly desires that all men should come to him and let themselves be helped. To these he offers himself in His Word, and it is his will that they hear the Word and do not stop their ears or despise it." Tappert quotes Mt. 11:28, though it is not in the text. *FC, SD*, Art. XI, Election, Tappert 620.28: "Hence if we want to consider our eternal

election to salvation profitably, we must by all means cling rigidly and firmly to the fact that as the proclamation of repentance extends over all men (Lk. 24:47), so also does the promise of the Gospel." Then Mt. 11:28 is quoted among other passages. *FC, SD, Art. XI, Election, Tappert 626.65*: "We should accordingly consider God's eternal election in Christ, and not outside of or apart from Christ. (Mt. 11:28 quoted among other passages.) Thus the entire holy Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, directs all men to Christ as to the book of life in whom they are to see the Father's eternal election." On the same page, paragraph 70: "Therefore no one who wants to be saved should burden and torture himself with thoughts concerning the secret counsel of God, if he has been elected and ordained to eternal life. . . . God wants all men who are laden and burdened with sin to come to him and find refreshment and be saved. Mt. 11:28."

6. Vs. 29: That Jesus is speaking about forgiveness of sins and everlasting life became apparent in the last part of the previous verse. It becomes even plainer in this verse, especially at the end. Jesus does not promise us immunity from family, social, academic, economic and political problems. He does not promise us a Utopia. But He does promise rest FOR THE SOUL, freedom from the guilt and power of sin, freedom from the threat of death, freedom from the power of the devil. On this verse Fahling says: "In Rabbinical imagery and OT words, NT Gospel truths are expressed." And then in a fnt.: "'Take My yoke and learn from Me' expresses the relation of master and pupil." And then one more sentence from Fahling: "All believers in Christ will find true rest for their souls in Him who has taken the burden of their sins from their shoulders and put them on His own." Perhaps the καὶ in 29a is exegetical. Note how often Jesus refers to Himself in 29 and 30, five times, to say nothing about the emphatic ἐγὼ in vs. 28. What is His yoke? What does He teach us? The answer is: "The kind of person He is. He is meek, that is, forgiving. He is lowly in heart. He condescends to love and save sinners." τῆ καρδίᾳ is dative of respect: "with reference to My heart, My innermost being." The last καὶ is resultative. When you've learned Who Jesus is and what kind of person He is you will discover rest for your souls, a spiritual rest, reconciliation with God. Why does He call this a "yoke"? Because Christians are in the world but not of the world. The Greeks considered the Gospel foolishness, the Jews an offence. The Judaizers said that faith in the Gospel was insufficient. The false teachers at Colossae claimed a special type of spirituality. So do the charismatics today. Many people today consider the Gospel God's weakness, not the power of God unto salvation. Bengel suggests that the word "burden" is here used somewhat as in the prophets of the OT. The true Gospel became a burden to them because many rejected it. It is not easy to be a consistent believer in Christ Jesus, finding one's rest only in that Gospel because the people of the world are constantly accusing Christians of stressing the wrong thing.
7. Vs. 30: γὰρ explains the previous verse. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. If you abandon His yoke, His burden, you must bear your own guilt, you have no rest for your soul, you have no assurance that He will guide and lead you, you have no assurance of eternal election, you are not on the way to heaven. Jesus is not saying that life is easy. Read the account of the saints in Hebr. 11. Many of them suffered much. But despite all of that "His yoke is easy and His burden is light." Afflictions, the cross and suffering simply drive the Christian closer to Jesus. Jn. 15:1-5; Hebr. 12:1-11; II Cor. 12:1-10. Vss. 28-30 in Mt. 11 are Gospel, not Law.
8. To summarize: Vss. 25-27 tell us that the saving relationship to God has been attained for us by His Son, Jesus Christ. Vss. 28-30 are an open invitation to all men to find their temporal and eternal rest in the incarnate Christ through His Word. For, without words who would ever have known about it?