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“With Our Burdens, We Come”

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

SPECIAL MUSIC: “Burdens”

Jamie Kimmett

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DquWxeycBIQ>



LAY THOSE BURDENS DOWN

The seeds I have sown
Crush my body and bones.
My shoulders are weak
So much so, I don't speak.
Though my mind screams,
Pain unrequited
Leaving me un-united
With the peace of my soul.
Overburdened and strained,
I feel chained,
Like Marley's ghost,
Feet staggering, swaggering,
As I drag myself across the earth
And leave my worth
In the hands of those who pity me.

Can God be so unjust
As to break trust
With me.
Plowing furrows of insanity
Through the fields of my mind.
Has he left me to my torment
To stand alone and foment
A plan to give way to the waves
That crash against my grave
And try to wash me away,

No longer tethered to my rock,
My purpose in hock
To the burdens on my back

But I have read
What Jesus said.
For he has decreed
There is no longer a need
For me to be crushed to the bone.
By burdens that can be released
Within those words I find peace,
Peace through Jesus alone.
Chains broken,
Words left unspoken
As I leave my burdens
At the foot of the cross
Where each mill weight becomes dross
In the hands of Jesus.
I just have to let them go
And not pick them up again.

The farm that my mom and dad had in east Texas had a great story behind it. My mom grew up there with her brothers and sister. Life was very hard for her family. Long before I came to be, the land was sold. Years later, my mom and dad had the opportunity to buy the place back, and they did. The house and barn were falling apart, way beyond repair. Still, it was land, and my mom and dad were so very excited to make something out of it. It would prove to be our weekend getaway place. But we had to start from scratch.

First, we had to clear the area for a building and dad taught me to use an idiot stick. I cut a ton of Johnson grass with that idiot stick, and we made an area to put the cabin on. The cabin was little more than an aluminum shell that had be finished out. We hung sheet rock and paneling, put in some closet space and a kitchen sink even though we had no running water. Dad installed a wood cook stove, and we took baths in an aluminum trough. We had bunk beds for my sister and I and mom and dad slept on the pull-out a hide-a-bed. Together, dad and I built a pole barn. But we really didn't have anything to put into the barn.

So, dad bought a very old tractor and a farm pickup. Both is horrible condition. He often spent more time repairing the tractor and the truck than actually doing any farming. Parts for those vehicles were sparse. My dad was a excellent mechanic and he managed to keep those vehicles running for a couple of years. But even the best mechanic could not have kept that truck and tractor running. He did manage to sell the old truck and bought himself a decent used one. The he bought a new Ford tractor. It was smaller than the other one but was much better suited to our needs.

The point to this story is that there is a time when we have to realize that what we are doing is not working out. It's like we have blinders on. We get so engrossed in trying to make things work that we forget that making things work is not really our purpose. Farming is not about fixing tractors or pickup trucks. It's about growing seeds or raising animals. We do have to keep things repaired, but if we are spending more time fixing the tractor than planting and harvesting the crops, we have taken our eyes off of our purpose. Sometimes, we have to let go. It is easier to do that when we have friends and family around to talk truth into our lives, so that we can remove the blinders and see how fruitless our endeavors are. Sometimes, we need a two-by-four to the back of the head to shake us out of that which is obstructing our purpose. We need to pay attention to those around us when that happens, open our eyes and ears, see and listen. What purpose have we served if we get to the end of a growing season and realize we have no fruit, grain, or animals left. But we are so proud that we have fixed the tractor in time to put it in the barn for winter.

There is a story in Greek mythology about Sisyphus. Sisyphus was the founder and king of Ephyra which later became Corinth. The story of Sisyphus is one that most of us have heard at some point. In the story, Sisyphus manages to beat death not once, but twice. For this irritation, Hades (king of the underworld) punished Sisyphus to push a large stone up a mountain. Whenever the stone neared the top of the mountain, it would roll back down again, and Sisyphus would have to start all over. This was an eternal punishment. Whenever we run into a job, task, or obstruction that we can't seem to find a way to complete or go

around, we call that event Sisyphean. A burden that we carry and can't drop. A heavy stone that we force ourselves to continually roll up the mountain. A task, that no matter how hard we try, we cannot complete. We don't have the strength, stamina, or possibly the knowledge. Maybe our tools keep breaking. We are spinning our wheels and losing focus on what matters. We are like hamsters on a hamster wheel and can't seem to find our way off. What's worse, we don't want to get off. Instead of realizing that we are not making any progress, we tell everyone, "Hey look! See how fast I can make this wheel go!"

The series this month is built around the word 'COME' and we will be discussing how we come to God and how he in turn comes to us. What needs to be in place in our lives to come before our Creator and what needs to be present for God to come to us. How does Christ fit into all this?

When I was a child, it was drilled into me that the United States of America was founded on Christian principles and Judaic Law (like the ten commandments). And this bit of trivia may confound some of you. I am not out to cause disagreement or difficulties. I do see our founding fathers as true visionaries, warts and all. But the truth is that many of our founding fathers, the ones that established the Continental Congress and wrote the constitution, were professed Deists, not Christians. It was the most popular theology among the educated of that time. It was considered high-brow and the theology of great thinkers. If you are unfamiliar with what a Deist is, it is the belief in an all-powerful Creator and that the Creator does not interfere in any way with his Creation. He is a hands-off God. He is a clock-maker who builds the clock of

Creation, winds it up, and lets it run. He does not touch it. He does not interfere with its workings or inhabitants. He has no personal interaction with his children. Christian Deists believe in the teachings of Christ but not in the divinity of Christ. They do not see Christ as the Son of God. Just another wise teacher.

At the same time, Christianity in the new republic was at an all-time high with 75-85% attendance rate among the churches. New churches were being planted constantly. And even among the Deists in Congress, Christianity was seen as a uniting factor for the people. Even though Congress established a separation between church and state, they began making declarations that encouraged belief in Christianity.

If you think about it, we all probably know a few deists, people who accept that there is a Divine Creator but have no personal relationship with the Trinity do not place any value in salvation. There is a great number of Deists in our world and many that call themselves Christians without realizing that they are Deists, ignoring the divinity of Christ the Savior. Deists find it illogical that a man or woman can have a personal relationship with God. To them, it simply doesn't make sense. A deist will often put on an air of belief in Christianity in order to appease those of us who are less educated. What a miserable experience that has to be, to know that there is a God, but also believing that he cares nothing about his Creation, like having an absentee father or mother. The saddest part about being a Deist is that there is no reason to lay their burdens down. They are obligated to tough their troubles out because of their belief that God simply won't help them. It is not in his nature.

It is our purpose, mandated by Christ, to bring truth to all people. Deists already have their foot in the door by believing a Creator. They just need someone with a personal relationship with Christ to help lead them home.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

You see, Deists carry their burdens alone because they don't believe what Jesus was talking about when he said,

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

They don't believe it because they believe God will not lift a finger to help them, to take their burdens, to involve himself in a relationship like a loving Father and his children. A Deist will embrace the secular side of Christmas without Christ at the center. For a Deist, Easter is a sad time where a wonderful teacher was executed for his social and religious views, but there is no resurrection, no stone rolled away, no angels in the garden, no salvation through the sacrifice of Christ.

We often behave like deists. "I don't need to take this to God. I can handle it. Besides, he wouldn't help me anyway."

I tell you this because I want you to understand just how powerful Matthew 11:28 is. Jesus is telling us to bring our burdens, all of our burdens and lay them at his feet. Not just the burdens that we feel are too heavy. Not just the burdens that we are tired of carrying. Not just the burdens that we are ready to release. All of our burdens. Because he is Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, our

brother, teacher, and savior, confessor, and encourager. He can carry all of our burdens without breaking a sweat. Everyone's burdens. There is no burden too light or too heavy.

“But pastor, maybe I just don't want to bother Jesus with my trivia and my pain. I can handle it on my own.” I believe you. I believe in your independence. I believe in your right to carry those burdens. The world expects us to be stoic in our lives. It trains us from birth to do our best not to be a burden on anyone else, including God. The world tries to make us seem weak if we falter and cannot carry the load of our burdens. That our suffering is just a part of living. That because we make bad decisions, we deserve to have to carry our burdens, pushing the rock up the mountain, just like Sisyphus. We know that God loves us but can see no way out of our dilemma. Like a bird that remains in a cage even after the door is opened.

Many years ago, when I was a scout, I was a platoon leader. I had a young man about three years younger than me in my platoon. One summer, the troop took a camping trip to a scout reservation on Lake Bridgeport. It was miserably hot. But we were working on merit badges and crossing off requirements. One of those requirements was a five-mile hike. Not really a big deal for those of us in shape. We had to carry our backpacks and what we filled them with was basically essentials. I should have checked everyone's pack, but we were in a rush to leave, trying to beat the sun. We got about four miles into the hike when the young man in my platoon passed out from heat exhaustion. I sent guys ahead to the camp so that the scoutmaster could bring his truck and come pick him up. I

pulled the young man into some shade, gave him water from my canteen, and propped his feet up so that he didn't go into shock. While we waited on the scoutmaster, I picked up the young man's pack. It was soooooo.... Heavy. I just had to see what he had done to make it so heavy. I had specifically told everyone to pack light, take only what they might need. What I found in the pack made me hang my head in shame for not having checked his pack before we started out. Instead of packing for a hike and taking only the minimum, he had stuffed his pack with dirty clothes, cans of food, and rocks he had been collecting. He had brought no water or first aid kit. No knife. Nor anything that we normally take on a hike. No wonder the heat got to him. And I felt responsible.

The young man was taken to the hospital where they hydrated him, and he was back in camp the next day. But I still felt horribly guilty. I did sit him down and explain to him why he had gotten sick and how he could prevent that in the future.

The problem with burdening ourselves is that we become ineffective. Ineffective in our duties. Ineffective in our purpose. Ineffective tools. Ineffective in our mindset. Ineffective in our ability to lift others because we are too busy trying to carry things that we were never meant to carry. We are so fortunate that we do not embrace a theology of deism, because a deist is forced to carry their burdens. They do not expect God to reach out his hand and lift those burdens off of them. They do not believe that they can put them down and walk away from them.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

We are so blessed to understand what Jesus meant when he said those words. Jesus wants our burdens. He wants to relieve us of our burdens. And we need to understand that there are two reasons for that.

- 1. God loves us and truly wants the best for our lives. He doesn't want us to be suffocating under unnecessary burdens. When we are so focused on our own burdens it is impossible for us to serve others.**
- 2. God wants us at our best. At our sharpest. At peak performance, so that we can be his hands and feet in this world. It is impossible to serve as his hands and feet if we insist on having heavy weights tied to our bodies, minds, and spirits.**

We are blessed that he wants to take them away. He loves us so much, he died so that he could take them away. So why can't we seem to lay them down and let them go?

I made a post this week about how I can be a stiff-necked and stubborn person, but how grateful I am that God loves me in spite of that. I had a gentleman amongst my readers let me know that it was a horrible thing for me to confess. I have told you before that you are never to put your faith in me, but always in Christ. Because I am human, I am bound to let you down at some point. I need of constant mending and repair and I am not afraid of the work it takes. I am not afraid to show my wrinkles to the world because I have a savior that cares for me even when I falter, even when my scars are deep, even when my wrinkles show the history of my life on earth. God is constantly throwing me back on the potter's wheel and reshaping me. I have become comfortable in his warm hands

as he makes me into what he needs me to be. So, no, I am not afraid to tell you that I can be stubborn. I can also be jealous, lonely, and proud. I am a work in progress and always will be. As the world changes around me, I submit myself to God as he refashions me into a better tool to help those around me.

I want us all to think about that this week. I want us to consider all that Christ does for us in spite of ourselves, how he works out the cracks and crevices of our clay to make us better tools. The first step in that process is admitting to ourselves that there is always a need for improvement. We can always be better tools in our community and the world around us if we will only submit to the hands of the potter. Jesus won't take our burdens if we can't admit we have burdens. We need to leave the go-it-alone deist theology behind us and embrace our living, breathing redeemer. He can make us whole. He can make us complete. He can use us to our full potential if we will only let go of the things that push us down. Let us leave our Sisyphean pride behind us and lay our burdens down at the feet of Jesus..

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

God bless you all,

AMEN

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