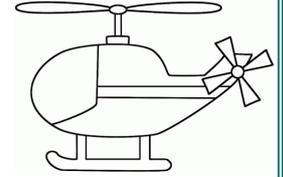


Thought for Sunday 5th July

I had a boss who used to twirl his finger in the air when we were getting into a lot of detail, and say *“helicopter up, guys; helicopter up”*. Today we’re going to helicopter up; we’re going to fly over the whole landscape of Matthew 11:16-19 and 25-30 in just a few words, so get your Bibles out and let’s helicopter up.



Actually, let’s fly up not down. In verses 25-30 Jesus explains the invitation he’s giving to us all. And then in verses 16-19 Jesus explains why so many people reject that invitation.

Huh? **Reject** the invitation? Read on....

The invitation Jesus gives: who is it for, and where do we go? (Matthew 11:25-30)

Who is it for? Jesus is extending this invitation to anyone who is burdened and weary – and that’s pretty much all of us. You see, “burdened” in the Bible has a specific meaning – it’s used to describe that need we have to prove ourselves, to measure up. You want to prove yourself, whether that’s as a parent or a daughter or son or friend or as a provider or someone to look up to, or even as a winner. Whatever it is, it’s how you tell yourself you matter, how you prove yourself. And the pursuit of it makes us weary. I don’t know how you are feeling at the moment. You may be worried or stressed; you may be frustrated or energised to achieve. But if you are feeling burdened and weary in any way, Jesus’ invitation is for you.

Where do we go? Jesus’ invitation is to come, not to a set of rules or intellectual ideas, but to a person. *“Come to me”* Jesus says. *“Come to me, and I will give you rest for your soul”*. You don’t need to prove anything, or achieve anything. You can just come.

Tim Keller says *“Christianity is not primarily about laying down your sin, but about laying down your “doing”*. You cannot earn what Jesus will give you. You do not need to fight or to prove yourself or to justify yourself. You just need to come.



And then Jesus completes the invitation by saying, come and learn from him. You can’t get verse 28 without verse 29; you can’t get rest without discipleship – without learning from and following Jesus. Every day we look to Jesus, and we look at his life, his word, his humility, his greatness, and learn from him. *“Come to me”*, says Jesus. Lay down your burdens and weariness, find rest and a new sense of value and significance and identity as you exchange the things you’re yoked to for Jesus. And each day let’s look to Jesus and learn from Him as we take on all He has for us.

Why people reject the invitation (Matthew 11:16-129)

In the earlier part of our passage, Jesus conjures up a brilliant picture. You see, in pretty much every village at that time there were only really two major events; weddings, and funerals. Weddings would last the best part of a week, with dancing and singing and eating and drinking. It was a great event. And funerals also lasted a week, with the family staying at home and people visiting, and maybe sing sad songs or tell stories of the person who had died.

For the typical village at that time, that was pretty much it. So the children had really only two games – weddings and funerals. And the picture Jesus paints is of a kid having a sulk.

We say, *“let’s play wedding; we’ll play happy music and dance and sing and have a great time!”*

And you cross your arms and say, *“no. I don’t want to”*.

“Ok then”, we say, “let’s play the other game. Let’s play funeral. We’ll play really sad music and walk up and down looking sad.”

And you shake your head and say, *“NO. I DON’T WANT TO!!!”*.

So what’s the problem with the sulky kid? Why is she sulking? She’s sulking because she isn’t in charge of the game.

And that’s why so many of us reject Jesus. **We** want to be in charge. Not Jesus. Not God. Me.

Did you know that the number one song to play at a funeral in the UK is still “I did it my way”? *“I’ve lived a life that’s full, I travelled each and every highway, and more, much more than this, I did it my way.”*

We won’t join in with ANY invitation from Jesus, because we want to be in charge, whatever consequences that has. Is that you? Or someone you know?

And so it all becomes personal. An invitation, to accept or refuse.

When we accept Jesus’ invitation, we’re saying, *“I want to go forward on the path you have for me, Jesus. I want to be the person you intended me to be when you made me. I will look to you every day, and learn from you. And I know that in coming to you, I can lay my burdens down and find rest for my soul. Rest, because I am now in the place my heart knows is the place I was meant to be.”*

“Come to me”, says Jesus. *“With all your burdens, with your weariness, with all the things you’re yoked to; come”*. Here you can lay your burdens down, because Jesus promises to give you rest for your soul, he promises a yoke that is easy and light, he promises to be right there with you, as you learn from him each day. Your choice.

Me, I’m accepting the invitation.

Brian Senior