

"THE WINSOME INVITATION"

Matthew 11:28-30

The call of Jesus in this Scripture is a most radiant of all requests.

When the day is bleak and you come in at night - here is a refuge.

You are confronted with invitations every day. Some of these are most beneficial and meaningful. I was invited by a friend to go hear George W. Truett preach. It made a great impact on my life, a man with a golden voice who preached without a microphone in his hand or around his neck. He convinced you that he was convinced.

The direction of my life was changed when the invitation came from South Norfolk Baptist Church some 34 years ago. The Spirit has opened so many doors.

Invitations often come to us for weddings. It is admission to the church to observe the ceremony and share a very blessed experience. In view of our love and regard we put this in our schedule.

The choice of life is simple either Jesus is your Saviour, or you are lost. You are invited to come in this greatest of all invitations.

Digging in the ruins of Pompeii, workmen uncovered a skelton of a child with outstretched hands. The workmen knew there had been a reason for the gesture. Digging in the direction of the outstretched hands, they came upon a skeleton of a woman, presumably the child's mother, also with outstretched arms. In that

horrible hour of need the child knew where to turn.

Jesus stands with outstretched hands and invites "Come to me" the word come appears in the Bible more than 600 times; about 200 in the Old Testament, and more than 400 in the New Testament.

God wants it to be clearly understood that the invitation is open to all.

Rev. Francis Clarke founder of the Christian Endeavor Movement, had the word "Welcome" printed in 17 languages on a beam across the front porch of his home.

Jesus gives his own invitation to every person listening.

We will use some words in offering his invitation today -- Lord - Load - Lift - Life.

I. LORD - "Come to me".

Notice - He did not say come to the Temple - or to the synagogue - or to the Disciples.

→ He said, "Come to me".

Emerson: "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."

The Christian faith does not need a dogma but a deliverer, not a creed but a Christ.

This is where we miss religion at its best. Aristotle thought of God as a process, but for us Jesus is the Galilean, the Son of God, the Lord.

Think of the sad substitutes we make. We look into other unsatisfying invitations!

Money invites us - prestige invites - drugs invites - drink invites.

*(out of 20 Doctors) 15 have invitation of  
100% drunk on  
mental prob.*

John 5:40 - "You are not willing to come to me in order to have life."

Do you know that the peak age of conversion is age 14. In Christian homes it is age 12. From non-Christian homes it is age 16.

90% of all people who become Christians do so by the age of 23.

The remaining 10% who do become Christians do so after 23, do so by age 40.

Then only a fraction of 1% become Christians.

People decide very early, generally as to what they are going to do with the

claims of Christ as Lord in their lives.

A man called Slim, worked in the railroad yards. He came up to Rev. Perry - can you tell me what's wrong with me? It used to be when I went to Revival Meetings, heard the songs being sung, the prayers being prayed, and the sermon preached, I was greatly stirred. When the invitation was given I almost had to hold on to my pew to keep from going forward. But Rev. Perry I don't feel that way anymore. I can go to a Revival Meeting, hear the songs being sung, the prayers prayed, and the sermon preached, but I'm not stirred. When the invitation is given, I don't seem to have any desire to go forward. Rev. Perry, can you tell me what's the matter with me?

Rev. Perry said, "Slim, I hope that I am wrong, but I'm afraid that you have committed the unpardonable sin."

The next day Slim died in a car accident. When a man has committed the unpardonable sin, it does not mean that his life will be taken immediately. He may live another five or ten years, but he will never be saved if the Spirit of God has left him.

Have you made Jesus Lord - delay is dangerous and never decides the need.

II. LOAD - "All who labor and are heavy laden.

Consider the load many people were bearing in the time of Jesus heavy burdens, many are today.

There are people, for instance, whose work is sheer dread. I have seen people who labored until the weight of their work was an almost impossible encumbrance.

By way of illustration, they get in the position of the desk in my office, talk about something being burdened, I don't know how it stands up, now mind you, I use this as comparison only. Some have volunteered to be my Secretary for a month, all the way to bringing a shovel and sacking it up! What I'm talking about is, it's loaded!

Marian Anderson, great American singer, was asked, what was the supreme moment of your life? She could have given many answers - she sang before nobility of Europe - her response was beautiful and simple - "The greatest moment in my life; was when I received enough money from singing that I could tell my mother she no longer had to take in washing."

Another burden - like sorrow is a heavy load. The Disciples went to sleep in The Garden. One translation justifies their conduct with these words - Luke 22:46. "He found them asleep, worn out by grief. That does make a difference!

I know what the burden of grief is - as I share it on the death journey with those who are close to me, the burden seems heavier at times than I can bear.

Hate is a burden. It is like a ball and chain about a person's neck and heart. Dead weight - this is a load our Lord can remove. Promise in V. 28 encompasses every need.

This committment is needed:

I have closed the door on hate  
He comes only to deceive and destroy.  
Love will come if I but wait  
For some deed of mercy I can do,  
And hate can't live where love is true -  
And that is the cause of joy!

Unforgiven sin is one of the heaviest loads. This is a burden many will not yield - the unrepentant heart we do not surrender.

Man committed suicide - left a note giving a single line reason: "I can't live with myself any more."

The winsome invitation tells of a companionship that can see us through any yesterday of regret, any today of loneliness, any tomorrow of fear.

III. LIFT - "I will give you rest."

Holy Spirit is translated as comforter. A word with power, energy, grace. He walks with you in the shadows and is powerful, energing, grace giving.

His very presence lifts us regardless of the burden. "I will give you rest."

This resting is raising - lifting.

A minister went to a couple in deep waters of anguish. He read the promise - Deut. 33:27 - "The eternal God is Thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." He said to the husband and wife - the arms of God are not up there flapping around in the sky somewhere - they are underneath! They are underneath!"

#### IV. LIFE - Take My Yoke Upon You

We become companions of Christ - "Yokefellows"

Yoke is a wooden frame that joins oxen for the purpose of moving a load.

In our text we are yoked to Christ for the purpose of life!

It is through grace, his power, his presence that the new life in our Lord is shared. We are in fact yoked to him and may we never forget the Lord carries the heavy end.

The call of Christ is an invitation to walk with him. Through us he wants to call other people.

Think of it! We are to live and love and lift with him. (Hand in hand, heart in heart share the good news with humanity.

I Chro. 11:17 - "And David longed and said oh, that someone would give me a drink

of water from the well at Bethlehem, the one that is down by the gate." Rich story.

David fleeing from Saul - burdened he did not want to murder Saul.

Hiding in the cave of Adullan, surrounded by Philistines, tired, discouraged, burdened. Cries out - "I wish somebody would bring me a cup of water from the well back home in Bethlehem, the one by the gate."

David's warriors heard that cry and slipped out and returned with some water.

David was so moved he poured it out an offering unto the Lord.

His cry was more than physical, it was spiritual refreshment!

"I need something to get myself back together. As a boy I tended flocks of sheep and used to come into safety of the gate and get a drink at that well. And oh, how it would refresh me! I need, now something like that little town and well gave me.

Are you burdened as David today! Troubled - loaded with care - sin is heavy upon your heart - do you long for relief - do you want to be right with God.

Alcohol is a load - tensions - uncertainty of the future.



James Stewart tells of a letter written by a commander of a British ship, an officer who sailed under Lord Nelson.

Pointing out the calamities through which they were passing, the commander wrote, "We are half-starved, and otherwise inconvenienced by being so long out of port. But our reward is - we are with Nelson!"

I cannot think of a greater invitation today, than the one Jesus extended - come and be a yokefellow with the Redeemer. We are with Christ!