

ATHE SAVIOR=S INVITATION@

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Mt. 11:28

The Bible is full of invitations. God is always seeking sinners, inviting sinners, pleading with sinners to be saved. When the first blighting sin stole into the garden of Eden, Adam=s smiting conscience made him afraid to face God. But God came in the cool of the day and called to Adam saying, AWhere art thou?@ And, from that day to this, a seeking God has been calling to sinners who avoid him, AWhere art thou? Where art thou? Where art thou?@

Throughout the whole of the Bible we hear the mighty voice of God speaking to people B urging them, beseeching them, pleading with them B to turn from their evil ways and be saved.

We hear him as he speaks through the voice of Isaiah calling, AHo, everyone that thirsteth -- come -- eat and drink.@ We hear him as he speaks through the voice of Ezekiel saying, ATurn ye, turn ye from your evil ways.@ We hear him as he trumpets the call through the voices of prophets and priests, ARepent. Repent. The day of the Lord is at hand.@ We hear him as God incarnate in human flesh speaks through the voice of his precious son, Jesus, ACome unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.@ AHim that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.@

There are two tremendous truths revealed in our text. The first is the Savior=s invitation. The second is the sinner=s obligation. First, let=s look at

THE SAVIOR=S INVITATION

Matthew 11:28 -- ACome unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.@ How I thank God for this tremendous word of scripture. It is, as someone has said, ALike the shadow of a rock in a weary land. Like the life-giving waters of a desert oasis. Like the lights of home to a weary traveler.@

It is simple. Sublime. Satisfying. It is so simple even a child can understand it. It is so sublime it

embraces the very majesty, dominion and power of God. It is so satisfactory it is the Great Physician's balm to a wounded soul. It reveals God's offer of salvation and tells us

This is a Universal Offer.

@Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy ladened . . . @

In one of D.L. Moody's sermons there is a moving story of a man who came to the great evangelist seeking the way of salvation. Moody opened his Bible to my text and pointed out these words, ACome unto me *all* ye that labor and are heavy ladened . . . @ The man said, ABut, Mister Moody, I'm a drunkard.@ AIt does not say,@replied Moody, ACome unto me all ye that are not drunkards.=@

The man said, ABut mister Moody, I've abandoned my wife and my children.@ AThat is a dreadful sin,@replied Moody, Abut it does not say >Come unto me all ye that have not abandoned wife and children.=@ The man continued, ABut, mister Moody, I've stolen. I've been in jail.@ AI am sorry to hear that,@Moody said softly, Abut it does not say A>Come unto me all ye that are not thieves and have not been in prison.= It simply says, ACome unto me all ye that labor and are heavy ladened,= and, sir, if I understand what you have just told me, this gracious invitation includes you!@

Praise God, beloved, this is a universal offer. There are no strings attached. There are no reservations in it. There are no conditions to be met. It means exactly what it says, ACome unto me all ye that labor and are heavy ladened . . . @

It is clearly one of the greatest invitations in the entire Bible. It is all-inclusive in its blanket broadness. Every man, woman and child in all the world -- regardless of class or condition -- is included in it. From the king's throne room to the cheapest hovel. From the banker's private office to the murderer's death cell. From the queen's bedroom to the harlot's den. In every country, continent, climate and condition, people who are lost in sin and away from God are invited to Acome@and find forgiveness from sin and peace in their soul. Yes, this is a universal offer of salvation. Then, too, this matchless text tells us

This a Divine Offer of Salvation.

ACome unto me@is God's invitation.

It is not a church, or a preacher, or even the Bible that extends this invitation to you. God himself makes this offer. I am just a messenger. A representative. An ambassador. My poor voice is merely echoing the mighty voice of God. I am nothing more than his amplifier. His public address system. My only function is to extend *God's* invitation to you.

The other day I heard someone refer to Jesus as Athe way-shower.@ But he was wrong. Jesus is not Athe way-shower.@ Jesus is The Way! And what every poor, troubled heart needs to do is come to Jesus -- himself, in person -- and find peace. For Christ and Christ alone can cleanse from sin. Jesus only is our Savior. He alone can atone for sin.

Praise the Lord -- he, himself B tends to our sins and carries our sorrows when we bring them to him. He doesn't appoint a preacher, or a church, or even the angels in heaven to do this for him. *Jesus* is The Way. And, tonight, Jesus is inviting you, saying, ACome unto me . . . and I will give you rest.@"

Then, not only does this verse reveal the offer of salvation, it also describes --

The Blessings of Salvation.

AArt thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distressed?
Come to me,@said Jesus, Aand coming,
Be at rest.@"

All of us have, at sometime, had an occasion to visit a cemetery. Have you ever noticed, as you walked along the pathways, that headstone after headstone marking the graves of those who have

died bear the words: At Rest? That's an acknowledgment that this old world does not give any rest.

I read in a newspaper the other day that there are 25,000 suicides a year in America. Why? Because people have no rest of soul! My psychologists friends tell me that multiplied thousands suffer from deep anxiety. They say the wave of nervous disorders and emotional problems are on the increase. Why? Because people everywhere are discovering, the things of this world do not give any rest. But, praise God, Jesus said, Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest.

My friend, if you will heed this invitation this evening, you can have soul rest and heart peace. For in coming to Jesus, you will be free from the guilt of your past transgressions. They will be blotted out, to be remembered against you no more. Your garment will be spotless. Your record clean.

Hear these precious promises, There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. And again, Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow. Though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool. Yes! Praise God. You'll be free from the guilt of your past transgressions.

Then, too, if you heed The Savior's Invitation, Christ who gives you perfect peace, will free you from the bondage of present sin and temptation.

The Devil's hold on your life will be torn loose. The slave chains broken. Freedom, peace and joy will be your heritage. And your song throughout the countless ages of eternity will be:

I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

In one of his books, Hyman Appleman, a converted Jewish evangelist, relates a story which illustrates perfectly the saving, keeping power of Jesus Christ.

It was in a Denver mission where this mighty man of God was scheduled to preach. Just before the sermon they called for testimonies. One after another men and women stood up with joy-filled faces to testify what Jesus had done for them and meant to them.

Finally, an old woman rose to her feet. Her dress was grayish brown with age. Her hat was torn and wisps of her hair stuck out through the holes. Her face was lined and aged and tired. Looking up at the superintendent, who was leading the meeting she said, *AI*t was ten years ago tonight that you led me to Jesus, Jimmie. Do you remember?@

The superintendent smiled and nodded his head. *A*Do you remember what I was before I came to Jesus, Jimmie?@ The superintendent bowed his head and refused to answer. *AI*t's all right, Jimmie. They know all about me here. I was a streetwalker. A hooker. The cheapest kind of trash. But you loved me, Jimmie. You invited me to come in off the street and told me about Jesus.@

AI didn't respond at first. But you were patient with me, Jimmie, and finally I opened my heart to Jesus. And he came in! He forgave me. He cleaned me up and gave me a reason to live. Life's been hard, Jimmie. Sometimes, when the weather is good, I can get a job here or there. Washing windows or doing a laundry. And when that happens I have food to eat and a place to sleep.

*A*But there are other days, Jimmie. Days when the weather isn't good. When the wind is cold and the snow is deep. On those days nobody wants their windows washed or their laundry done. And when that happens, I don't have anything to eat and I have to sleep in a flophouse.

*A*But I want you to know, Jimmie, even then -- even then -- before I go to sleep, I get down on my knees beside my bed and I say, >Jesus, I'm old. And I'm sick. And I'm hungry. And I'm tired. But Jesus, I love you. I ain't much. But Jesus, all I am is yours for keeps.=@

Beloved, that's what I'm trying to tell you. Jesus has the power to take the weakest, vilest, most unappealing soul, cleanse it with his blood, fill it with his Spirit and bind it to himself with the strongest bonds of love and loyalty. He can keep it pure and clean, so no matter how hard the

trials, how trying the tribulations, how dark the way -- the victory is assured.

That's what Jesus will do for you -- tonight -- if you heed his call, ACome unto me and I will give you rest.@

Oh, what blessings God has in store for you if you heed this invitation.

Rest in the fact that your past is forgiven and forgotten.

Peace in the knowledge that the present is in his hands. And finally,

Joy -- boundless joy -- in the assurance that by coming to Jesus you are free from the effects of sin in the world to come.

Have you ever heard of a more wonderful invitation than that? And then, having told you about The Savior's Invitation, let me tell you about

The Sinner's Obligation.

If you are outside of Christ tonight -- please hear me now. If you forget all else I say -- hear me *now*! Jesus came into the world to seek and to save sinners. Through this matchless invitation he is seeking you tonight. Even as I speak B that still small voice within you is pleading, ACome. Come. Come unto me all ye . . . and I will give you rest.@

It is your obligation to heed his call. Please do not spurn his offer of salvation, but right now, right there where you are, say:

AJust as I am without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me
And that thou bidst me come to thee
Oh, Lamb of God, I come. I come.@

If you do, the blessings of eternity are yours. Death will lose its sting. The grave will lose its victory. The Last Judgment will lose its fears. Eternity will lose its uncertainty. Your name will be inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life. Jesus will give you peace for today and the hope of a

brighter world for tomorrow. But first, you must receive him. Do it now. And you'll be able to say:

I've anchored my soul in the Haven of Rest

I'll sail the wild seas no more.

The tempest may sweep o'er the wild, stormy deep,

In Jesus, I'm safe ever more.®