

The Wooing Saviour (Part 1)

by J. Glyn Owen

In 'The Wooing Saviour', J. Glyn Owen explores Jesus' invitation to the weary, emphasizing His unique relationship with the Father and the peace He offers to troubled souls.

Duration: 42:45

Scripture: Matthew 11:25

Topics: "Election"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the answer to all human needs and offers rest and peace to those who seek it. The preacher highlights the capacity and competence of Jesus to provide this rest, both during his time on earth and now as he is exalted at God's right hand. The preacher also mentions how the crowds were opposed to the messages of both John the Baptist and Jesus, comparing them to children who were not responsive to the different tones of music played to them. The sermon concludes with Jesus denouncing certain cities where he had performed mighty works, emphasizing the power of prayer and the miraculous provision of food for the hungry.

Transcript

We again acknowledge the goodness of God in bringing us together on another Lord's Day. As Mr. Lowe has already indicated, we as a congregation are very delighted to have a number of visiting friends among us. We trust you will find the fellowship sweet and the word of the Lord meaningful and powerful to exalt the Savior and make him more precious and trustworthy to all of us.

Our subject this morning, the wooing Savior. And I want to read now the passage following the passage we read earlier on in Matthew chapter 11, beginning with verse 25. At that time, Jesus said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. All things have been delivered to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Now, what I am aiming at in due course is to come to verses 29, 30, and 31. Sorry, 29 and 30. 28, 29, and 30.

Those last three verses. The wonderful invitation of our Lord to the multitudes who had gathered around him to come to him for rest and for peace and for grace. To come to him in order that they might discover with him what he himself already knows so richly and is able so gloriously to impart.

But what I have found is this, that so many people come to that verse without recognizing the context in which it is found. And if you do so, then you miss something of the exceeding rich glory of the invitation itself. When I read the passage beginning with verse 20, 28, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, whichever translation you have, my soul instinctively asks the question, who are you that I should come to you? Now, the answer to that question is found in the preceding verses.

And what I want to do this morning, God helping us, is to examine those preceding verses and if the Lord tarries, and we are together again next Lord's Day morning, we'll come to the invitation in the light of that context. The invitation today is in the background. If there is someone here who needs rest and knows not where to turn for it, well then you go forward and read those last three verses.

There's the divine answer for all human ills. Christ is the answer. And the summons and the invitation of heaven today, as many years ago, is come to me.

Come to God revealed in Christ. But this morning we're going to look at those preceding verses and to see how they show, how they prove the capacity, the competence of our Lord Jesus Christ to offer trouble, distraught men and women, the peace of God that passes understanding, a rest of spirit that need not be ruffled. He was capacitated to do it in the days of his flesh, and if so, he is more so today, exalted at God's right hand, having sent forth the Holy Spirit and provided us with his word of counsel in scripture.

I call your attention then to those verses from 25 to 27. Now there are two things that I want us to look at in this setting in which the invitation appears. The first thing we're going to note arises out of the echo of our Lord's prayer there in verses 25 and 26.

Let me read them again for you. At that time Jesus said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. And this takes us by storm, because you've hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and you have revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this was your own good pleasure. In those words we have some expression of praise and of worship emanating from the heart of the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, as he thinks of his Father and as he contemplates him in this particular situation. But if we're going to profit from what we are examining here, we've got to take note of what the context has to tell us.

Now the least consideration of these words will serve to reveal one who really worships and honors and knows God. That's the first thing. Our Lord Jesus Christ is here worshipping God, praising God, and he is praising him not as someone that he's only heard about, but as we shall see in a moment, as someone whom he knows and knew as never any other person knew or knows.

His knowledge of God was utterly and absolutely unique, and in the midst of the circumstances that have now surrounded him, our Lord Jesus Christ comes out to praise him and to worship him. By the way, the word, the Greek word for praise here is a very strong one. It's not often used.

Now it comes here, our Lord is full of praise. It's not just, thank you Lord, thank you Father. It's not that.

It's something infinitely more. There is passion behind it. There is a whole soul self-giving in the same words.

This prayer of Jesus must surely be one of the most remarkable prayers ever uttered. Not only because it was so ardently offered, but because of the time when it was offered. Now Luke tells us that Jesus praised God in this very same way, using the same expressive Greek word on another occasion.

You have it in Luke chapter 10 in verse 21, if I remember correctly. But there we can understand our Lord Jesus Christ breaking out in exaltation and praise, because the setting makes it obvious why he did so. You may remember the story.

Jesus had sent out 70 preachers and healers, and on that occasion, Luke describes that they've come back and they're all joyful, magnifying the grace of God, because of what had happened through their feeble instrumentality. They knew themselves. They were but ordinary men, and yet they come back and they say to Jesus, Lord, they said, even the demons are subject to us in your name.

All kinds of things have been happening, but surely this is the climax. Even the demons are subject to us in your name. Jesus did not actually pour water on the flame of enthusiasm, as is evident by the wording of the passage, but he says, well that's wonderful.

I think in effect he said this. That's wonderful. I also saw Satan's lightning fall from heaven.

I knew what was happening, and I knew that you had power to deal with the enemy of the souls of men, but wait a moment, he says. Don't get overexcited about the fact that the demons are subject to you. Important though that may be, I gave you power to cast out demons after all, and you should be glad and grateful.

Rightly so, but that's not the thing to get excited about. The thing to get excited about is this, that your names are written in heaven. Not that you have power simply to cast out demons, but that you have the grace to enter into the courts of God.

That your names are written on the register of the kingdom of the most high, and you belong to him, and when the roll is called up yonder, you'll be there. And then as it were, when Jesus had told them that, he turns his eyes upwards, and he says almost exactly what we have here in Matthew. Oh, I praise you, Lord God of heaven and earth, because you've hidden so much of these things from the wise and the learned, and you've revealed these things, you've disclosed these things to the babes, the humble, the poor.

Now you can understand that, can't you? But here in Matthew, it's all so different. I hope you've noticed the context, even as we read this morning. Here in Matthew, it's almost inexplicable that Jesus should praise God at all.

You read the passage coming up to this great text, and you'll see the kind of thing that has been happening. Jesus, first of all, encountered, according to the passage, the chapter before us, he encountered the doubts of John the Baptist. You notice the words before you, they come right at the beginning of the chapter there, beginning with verse 4. Oh, no, sorry, it begins even earlier than that.

It begins with verse 2, when John heard in prison certain things that were happening. He was puzzled, and he sent two men to Jesus to ask him a question, and the question was this. Now, remember, this is John the Baptist.

Are you really the one that was to come, or have we still to look for somebody else? Now, my friends, if you know your New Testament, you will appreciate what a tremendously shattering blow that might have been for the Lord Jesus. After all, the number one witness, humanly speaking, to the fact that Jesus was the Messiah was none other than John the Baptist, who saw the Holy Spirit not only come down from heaven upon him, but as he says, as the Father had told him would happen when the Messiah appeared, the Spirit will come down upon him and will remain upon him. The Spirit had already come upon many, but not remained upon them.

But the dove of heaven would come down upon the Messiah, the anointed of God, and the Spirit would remain upon him. Now, he says, says God to John, he is the one who will later on baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And John bore witness.

I was there, he says, I saw it happen. God forewarned me, God prepared me, and I saw it happen. I saw the Spirit in visible form coming down upon him and remaining upon him.

And I introduced him to my followers as the Lamb of God that had come to bear away the sin of the world. But I'm not so sure now. See, John was in prison, and he was in prison because he was a witness to the Messiah, because he was a believer in the Messiah, and because he was faithful to him.

Why was John doubtful? Now, I can't deal with this as it deserves this morning, but let me just throw out one or two thoughts that may help anyone to whom this is a little bit of a worry. Why should John doubt? Well, it would seem that John was doubting for this reason. Our Lord Jesus Christ had been introduced by him in particular terms.

He had said, for example, that his acts, the acts of the Messiah, the judge is already at the very root of the tree. And his main image of the Messiah was of one who would come in judgment. He said he will thoroughly purge his floor, he will gather the corn and put that in its due place, and he will take the chaff, and he will throw the chaff into unquenchable fire.

When he comes, he's going to come in judgment. You see, John shared in this view of Messiah and had missed, just like the Jews generally, had missed other elements of his promised and prophesied ministry, such as the fact that he would preach the gospel to the poor, and that those who heard his voice would leap out from the prison cell, and that the blind would see again, and so forth. And some of the more gracious aspects of our Lord's ministry had not been as clear to John as the fact that Jesus would come as judge.

John, therefore, was not quite sure at this time. When he heard that Jesus was moving about preaching good news to the poor, healing people here and there, spending so much time with the physically needy and the materially derelict, dear old John said, is it him after all? I don't hear of judgment. I said the axe is laid to the root of the tree, the tree's still standing, there's not a branch being lopped off.

Jesus told the two messengers to go back, you just tell John what you see. You just tell him. Implying, of course, that if they tell John what they are seeing in terms of scripture, and of fact, in terms that remind John of the words of Old Testament prophecy, and of truths they themselves have witnessed, of facts they

themselves have witnessed, sooner or later he will realize that Jesus is indeed the Christ.

He will come in judgment, he will purge his floor, he will bring the chaff and cast it into the fire, he will do that, but before that great day of judgment, there is another ministry. That was one thing in the background, and Jesus praises God, and he says, I thank you, Father of heaven and earth, that you hid these things from the great and the noble and exalted, and you revealed them to babes. Inexplicable, isn't it? But that's not all.

If you read on, in Matthew 11, verses 16 to 19, you'll see how the crowds were resolutely opposed, both to the message of John, before he'd gone into prison, and to the message of Jesus, who stepped out to take his place after John had been imprisoned. Those words there are very, very significant. To whom shall I liken, to whom shall I compare this generation, says Jesus.

They're like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others, we played the flute to you, and you didn't dance. We sang a dirge to you, and you did not mourn. You say, what on earth does he mean in that poetic strain? Well, what he meant was this.

John the Baptist came to you, and really, his message was a dirge of judgment. It had a somber ring, a terrifying ring of judgment to come. Did you listen to him? No.

You said, he's too otherworldly, he's too ascetic, he's not the kind of man for us, with his leather girdle, and his robe of camel hair, living in the desert, eating wild locusts and honey. This is not the man for us, moderns. We don't want any message like that, repentance.

Then he said, the Son of Man came. He dressed like one of you, and he didn't come from the desert place. He touched, rubbed shoulders with you.

He sat where you sat. He ate with you, and drank with you. He walked in your streets.

He came into your homes. He sat down and taught you. He was in the midst of you, like one of you.

And what did you say? Oh, he's a devil. He drinks. And they exaggerated, of course, and they said he was a drunkard.

Do you see the point? What Jesus is saying is this. This whole generation is a generation that's decided not to receive the Word of God. There are exceptions, but the generation per se, is a generation that is resolute in its rejection.

Whether you preach the message of judgment through John, or whether you woo them with the love of Jesus, it makes no difference. Whether you speak of the wounds that they will receive at last, or whether you speak of the wounds that Jesus has come to heal, it makes no difference. They will not have it.

And yet Jesus praises God. He worships. And he says, all must be right, Father, because it seemed good to you.

And if it's good to you, it must be good. I ask no questions. It's an awful day for me.

I'm having no success. And if this mission were to be determined, and were to be judged on the basis of the number of heads that are being registered as converts, then all would be gone. But nevertheless, Father, it's all right if it pleases you.

For I've come to do your will, and to finish your work. And that neither is the only thing. The passage ends with our Lord's denunciation of some of the cities where most of his mighty works have been done.

Now as a matter of fact, our Lord's mighty works were scattered all over the place. He was very generous. But there were certain cities that saw more than others.

And he mentioned some of them here. I can't go into the details now. We must pass on.

Do you remember what he says? You know some of you, he says, Chorazin and Bethsaida, and you, Capernaum. You know Capernaum, he says, you've seen, you've heard, you've watched, you know the power of God and of the kingdom of God present in my teaching and in my person. And yet you reject me wholly and completely.

Listen, let me tell you, he says, if Sodom had heard and seen what you have heard and seen, Sodom would still remain to this day. Yet our Lord praised and worshipped God. When everything is apparently moving against him at this juncture.

Now there were changes in the experience of our Lord. There were times when he was a little important in the eyes of men. But at this moment everything was against him.

And what does he do? Well look at our Lord's spontaneous affirmation concerning God's person as he prays in the midst of these trying circumstances. I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. Father, Lord of heaven and earth, he says, I've got nothing but praise to bring to you.

And I'm not doing it very formally. I'm exulting. I'm rejoicing in my heart as well as with my lips.

I rejoice, Father, because if this moment of difficulty and rejection is in your will, it must be right. Your promises will be fulfilled. Your plan will be accomplished.

The things that you have given me to do, I will do them. And by your grace and help, they will be completed. And you will fulfill your covenant.

But in the moment, if it is an evil day, then I will pray. But let me take that a step further. How was he able to do that? Well, we have the key here.

Because he knew God. Now my friends, I'm saying something which is so very, very commonplace, aren't I? And you and I can miss the preciousness of it. Therefore, let me bring forward here a statement that Jesus says a little later on.

No man knows the Father but the Son. And he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. No one else knows the Father, says Jesus.

I know him as no one else knows him. I know him because I am his only Son. And I know him as an only Son can know his Father.

And knowing my Father, he's to be praised in a moment of difficulty as in a moment of evident joy and success. I know my Father, he says, is the Lord God of heaven and of earth. Nothing has happened in the demon world.

Nothing has happened in the spiritual world. Nothing has happened in the heavenly places. Nothing has happened here upon earth but that my Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, is in soul and full and absolute and unqualified charge.

And even though that means that I be rejected and John, my dear cousin John, the forerunner, is asking questions, it is all for the Father's glory and sooner or later it will work out. Now let me add one other word to that and you will see the marvel of it. You see, what Jesus exemplifies in all this is this, that he knows rest of soul, peace of soul.

Nothing disturbs him. Later on, you see, later on in verses 28, 29 and 30, he will be turning to the crowd and he will be saying, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden with your burdens and your worries and your trials and your perplexities and everything's going wrong, come to me. What right, Jesus, have you got to say that and to call people to you? What can you do in time of trouble? Look at this and you see the answer.

You see, he so knew God, so knew God as his father, so knew God his father to be the ruler of heaven and earth that nothing could go wrong. He will therefore have peace and as the author of peace, as the one who has peace in his own soul, he is able to impart it to others. Here he shows that he is qualified to come to you this morning with your broken heart and your broken nights and your broken sleep and your broken pledges and your broken everything.

When your world is going up in bits and pieces, my friend, he's able to come to you and in that hour, he's got something to give. He had rest and because he had it, he can introduce you to the same God and Father and Lord of the universe that you may have it too, in the knowledge of the same God. Now, I'm closing with this.

Someone may very well say this morning, well, it's all very well to talk like that. I can't take it. I can't believe that the Lord Jesus Christ had this unique knowledge of the Father.

It's all very well to say that you know God. There may be someone here this morning, you see, in these strange days there are people who say that they know God better than everybody else. And there are people who claim I've had a revelation of God that you haven't got.

And you come and listen to me. Or you go to a Presbyterian church, well, I'm something different. Or you go to a Baptist church, I'm something different.

You go to an Anglican or a Pentecostal church, I'm something different. I've got this extra. You come to me, I know God as they don't.

They may not put it like that. But they'll tell you, you need what I've got. You come and listen to me and I'll lead you into it.

And when you get it, then in this esoteric moment, you'll graduate into an entirely new experience of God. How do I know that Jesus knew God? As Father, as Lord of heaven and earth. Now, my friends, if I was going to try and explain that, I'd need the whole of the four Gospels.

And I keep you a very long time, which I won't do. You know, that's exactly what the four Gospels tell us. That this man, Jesus of Nazareth, knew God as Father.

How do I know that? Well, I know that because he had commerce with him. And he knew the Father as Lord of heaven and earth. How do I know that? Because that in communion with the Father, in commerce with the Father, he received from the Father the kind of things that no one else ever received.

And he was able to receive gifts from the Father and give them to the most impotent and ordinary and humble people, so that they shared in some measure the kind of authority and power that Jesus himself had. He was able to receive that from the Father and impart it to feeble men. But babes, humanly speaking, caught the eyes of the populace.

And ordinary men and women did extraordinary things by the power that came to them from the Father, from God, through Christ. Now, you look at the life of the Lord Jesus. Let me remind you.

And just two or three things as I close. When he prayed to God, he was in touch with reality. Now, you and I are not always there.

Now, let's confess that. Sometimes when you and I say we're praying, we're just dreaming. Absolutely dreaming.

And we've got an imaginary God to whom we talk. And we talk in a way which is forbidden in Scripture. And we ask for things that are forbidden in Scripture.

And much, much else. We're living in a little crazy world of our own. And we are imagining that we are in touch with God, when we really are not.

I could enlarge upon that. But the thing I want to stress is not the negative, but the positive. You see, when Jesus prayed to God, the most amazing things happened.

He just sent a sigh of prayer up to God. And then he looks at 5,000 people who are hungry. And he takes a few loaves and a few fishes and he begins to bless them.

And the most amazing things happen. The 5,000 are not only satiated, satisfied, had enough. Somebody at the head of the table generally asks, have you had enough? Will you have more? Well, Jesus at the head of the table asked, have you had enough? And there were basketfuls over.

What happened? Well, I'll tell you. He prayed to the Father. And the Father heard.

And the Lord of heaven and earth worked in him and through him in such a manner as to prove that the kingdom of heaven was among men. The rule of heaven was present in the Son of Man. Now we could go through all the gospels and take note of the fact that when Jesus looks to heaven and then proceeds to act, there is always evidence following that he acts not in the power of his humanity, but in the power of God.

See, he knew the Father. He knew the Lord of heaven and earth. And in the knowledge of God, he had peace even when things went wrong.

Till we come toward the end of his life, he's coming up to Jerusalem to die. And he chose to spend that wonderful last weekend in Bethany, of all places. Do you remember what had happened there? Bethany was written indelibly on the heart and mind of our Lord.

He always had an open door into the home of Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. He said on one occasion, foxes have holes. Foxes have holes.

Yes, they have holes. And the birds of the air have nests. But I, the Son of Man, I don't have a place.

I don't have a hole. I don't have a nest. I don't have a place where I may lay down my head or hatch my chickens, to change the metaphor.

I don't have a place. But there was one place, there was one place where the door was always open, where the arms were always welcoming. It was Bethany.

And his dear friend Lazarus now had not only died, but he'd been buried, and he'd been buried for four days. And normally you wouldn't approach the graveside at that time for obvious hygienic reasons. But Jesus did.

And you remember when he came there, he sighed in spirit and he prayed. He prayed to God. I don't know what he asked the Lord altogether.

The only thing I want you to notice is that he prayed to God. He sought the aid of the Father he knew, the Lord of heaven and the Lord of earth, the Lord of the tomb, the Lord of death, whom he knew as his Father. I don't know exactly what he prayed, but I know that having prayed he said, Lazarus, I know naturally speaking you can't hear me, but I'm calling you in the power that my Father has given me.

Lazarus, come forth! And the dead arose. And out he came, bound in his shackles. But Lazarus came to life again.

You see what I'm getting at? He knew God. He knew him intimately. He knew him on the plane of asking and receiving as well as on other planes.

And because he knew him, he knew that even though John the Baptist is disappointed, and even though this generation is determined not to receive his message, and even though the cities in which most of his mighty works have been done are not going to accept any evidence, even as it accumulates on into the future, they're not going to accept any of it. They're going to deny him and reject him and crucify him. Nevertheless, Father, he says, I know you.

If it pleases you, it must be right. My heart says. Now he turns to the trouble hearted of yesteryear and today, and he says, all right, men and women, if you're passing through days of rejection and being downcast and disappointed and desolate, come to me.

I know all about it. And because I have such knowledge of the Father, I bid you come and in comradeship and fellowship with me, learn of me, and you too will discover rest for your soul. Oh, my word, what can you say of a Lord and a Savior like this? Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace.

There is none like him, and there never will be, there cannot be. He says so. He is God's first and God's last word to men, and he has finished the work the Father gave him to do.

He don't need to wait till next week. Come to him and be yoked to him and walk with him and learn of him and find from him. And in this marvelous experience of an ongoing discovery of the fatherhood and the sovereignty of God, life can never be a disappointment for what he wills.

We will know to be right or to know God like that. Come to him now. He may be knocking at the door of your heart this morning, and he may be appealing to your reason and to your conscience and to your known needs, your very experiences of this last week.

And everything's going against you, and you've lost this and you've lost that. And he says, now, come to me. Here's the answer.

Not until you too can say, I came to Jesus and I found in him much more than is enumerated in the hymn, everything. Not until you can say that, will you know the life of which the New Testament speaks and which Jesus and his faithful servants announce in every age. Come to him, therefore, today.

Let us pray. May I suggest that in these moments of closing, each one of us should express ourselves quietly in our souls. In whatever way the truth of scripture requires of us, respond to the Word of God.

For in so doing, you are responding to the God of the Word. We spend a moment quietly. Oh Lord, our God and Father, hear our prayer.

Hear our prayer and bring us all into the knowledge of that peace that Jesus gives, not as the world gives, and the peace that the world and Satan can never take away. Oh, blessed Savior, share your rest with your wrestling children on this Lord's Day morning as they go out again into a troubled world with you. For Jesus' sake we pray.

Amen. Amen.

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