

Matthew 11:25-30

I. Verse 25a – At that time Jesus declared...

At what time? Matthew is referring in general to the time when Jesus was denouncing the cities that refused to repent and believe in Him. This is the time when Jesus had been announcing judgment and doom. This is the time when Jesus condemned His generation for dismissing Him as “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners”. It was at *this* time, and in the midst of *this* obstinacy and hardness of heart that Jesus declared:

II. Verse 25b – I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth.

Doesn't it seem a little surprising that at this time, of all times, Jesus should be giving thanks? Luke says that “in that same hour *he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit* and said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth’” (10:21). Here is Jesus, full of joy and rapturous delight! He is filled to overflowing with praise and thanksgiving. And so He is compelled to cry out: “*I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth...*” Some translations say: “*I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth...*” So what is it that has filled Jesus with such joy and delight? What do you think? Can you possibly imagine what this would be?

We'll see the answer to this question in a moment, but first, we must not miss the amazing fact that Jesus says, “I thank you, *Father*.” Never before has a man addressed *God* simply as Father. He might say “our Father” even as Jesus taught *us* to pray, but never just plain “Father”. So now we have *two* questions: First of all, *what* is it that has filled Jesus with such joy and delight that He is compelled to cry out in thanksgiving and praise? And second of all, *who* is this man who calls God, the one who is Lord of heaven and earth, *Father*!

III. Verse 25c – I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, *that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.*

Were you startled by the amazing contrast? The Lord of heaven and earth is the creator of heaven and earth, the ruler of heaven and earth, the sustainer of heaven and earth. He is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, from everlasting to everlasting. He is sovereign over all. And yet this Lord of heaven and earth has chosen to associate with little children. What are “these things” that the Father has hidden from the wise and understanding and revealed to little children? They are the things concerning the good news of salvation, and the kingdom, and everlasting life. They are the things concerning Jesus. And who are the wise and understanding? The wise and understanding are not necessarily those who are academically smart and intellectual. The wise and understanding are all those who are wise *in their own eyes*. The wise and understanding are all those who seek to come to know God *through* their own wisdom and understanding – through their own efforts and abilities. And yet it is actually from these very people that God has *hidden* the way of salvation.

But *why* is *this* such good news? Why does this fill Jesus with such joy and delight that He is compelled to cry out in thanksgiving and praise? Well, *why* does God withhold the way of salvation from those who seek to come to know Him through their own wisdom and

understanding? Of the many answers that could be given, the answer given here is simply this: it was *in order that* the way of salvation might be revealed to little children. And who are these little children? I think that “little children” could be a misleading translation in our day. We may think of little children as sweet, and cute, and relatively innocent – even perhaps deserving. But of course, this is not the point (and neither is it true). Little children should really be translated “infants” or “babies” (NRSV; NKJV; cf. Mat. 21:16). The point is that infant babies are *immature* and *undeveloped*, they have *no* physical or mental abilities – they have *no* ability whatsoever to contribute anything to society. They can only take and never give. (cf. Heb. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 13:11; Rom. 2:20) This is not so sweet and endearing. In fact, if any one of us were compared with an infant, we would be deeply offended. And yet it is *only* to “spiritual” infants that God reveals the way of salvation. These *spiritual* infants are not necessarily the uneducated, or those who are not as intellectually gifted and advanced. Some of the most intellectual men in history have been passionate followers of Jesus Christ (take the Apostle Paul). And yet even the Apostle Paul had to be an infant. The infants that Jesus is talking about are those who realize that they cannot come to know the way of salvation through any wisdom of their own – through any of their own thinking, philosophizing, reasoning, or any other efforts or exertions of any kind whatsoever. Infants are those who see that since they cannot come to know the way of salvation through any wisdom of their own – since their own wisdom and understanding is utterly *worthless* to help them to God – therefore, the only option left to them is to *receive* that which is *given freely*.

God has hidden the things concerning the kingdom from the wise and understanding, *in order that* the way of salvation might be open to *all* – whether Greek or Jew, male or female, young or old, educated or uneducated, criminal or public hero, uncivilized or cultured, slave or free (cf. Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28)! As the apostle Paul says:

- ✓ Romans 10:11-13 – “*Everyone* who believes in him will not be put to shame”... for the same Lord is Lord of *all*, bestowing his riches on *all* who call on him. For “*everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

And so Jesus concludes His prayer of praise and thanksgiving with these words:

IV. Verse 26 – Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

Even in His rejection by entire cities and by the vast majority of His own generation – *even in this very rejection* – Jesus could see overwhelming evidence of God’s grace and mercy. God was *hiding* the truth from all those who thought they could come to know God by their own wisdom and understanding. But if God was hiding the truth from these people, Jesus knew that it was *because* of God’s gracious will to save *any* and *all* who would become like infants and simply believe. The people of Israel were seeking to know God through their own wisdom and understanding. But if they had been successful, this would have meant that the way of salvation was limited only to a *select* group of people – only to those who could labor strenuously enough and think deeply enough to gain the promised reward of everlasting life. The fact that the vast majority of the people of Israel had rejected Him was simply proof to Jesus that the way of salvation was open to *any* and *all* who would only call upon the name of the Lord and receive from His hand the *free* gift of everlasting life. This is why in the very midst of overwhelming

rejection, Jesus could rejoice greatly in the Holy Spirit and overflow with thanksgiving and praise to God for His *gracious* will! But now we still have to ask: Who is this man who calls God, the one who is Lord of heaven and earth, *Father*?

V. Verse 27a – All things have been handed over to me by my Father.

So now Jesus calls God not just “Father”, but “*my* Father”. And even more amazing is the fact that because He can call God His own Father, Jesus can also say that *God Himself* has handed *all things* over to Him. This means everything to us!

“All things[!]: earth, heaven, and hell; men, angels, and devils; time, death, and eternity; all things: salvation and damnation; grace and judgment; life and death; all things: truth, righteousness, glory, peace, and joy, consolation and refreshing, rest and hope, deliverance from sin, victory in temptation, overcoming the world, communion with God, the love of God, the life in God—all things have been delivered unto him. He is the almighty Lord, the Giver of divine gifts of grace, the Executor of all divine works, the Prince of life, and therefore the Captain of our salvation” (Petri; quoted in Lenski).

All these things and many more have been handed over to Jesus by His Father, so that *He has in Himself* all that we need for life and happiness (cf. Hendriksen).

VI. Verse 27b – And no one knows the Son except the Father.

Why does Jesus say this? Because He wants us to be staggered. He wants us to be consumed with wonder. What does it mean for the Father to *know* the Son, and to be the *only one* who knows the Son? What does this mean for us? Well, it means that the Father *loves* the Son as He could not possibly love *any other*.

✓ John 3:35-36 – The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

It means that the Father delights in the Son with a holy and perfect delight.

✓ Matthew 17:5 – This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

✓ Isaiah 42:1 – Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights.

And who is the Son? He is *Jesus* – the one standing right now before the crowds. And how can the Father (who is Lord of heaven and earth) possibly find such exquisite delight in Jesus? Because the heart of the Son is the *exact imprint* of the heart of the Father (cf. Heb. 1:3). The Father loves and delights in Christ because “in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9) “So great and so glorious is the heart of [the Son] that none but the Father can fathom its riches of knowledge, wisdom, and love” (Hendriksen).

Colossians 2:3 – In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

“No one knows the Son except the Father...”

VII. Verse 27c – And no one knows the Father except the Son.

Only the Son can fully rejoice in His Father's gracious will, because only the Son can possibly comprehend the riches of His Father's gracious will. Only the Son can know and love the Father because only the Son *always* obeys the Father and *always* does His will.

- ✓ John 5:30 – I can do nothing on my own... I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.
- ✓ John 6:38 – I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.
- ✓ John 4:34 – My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.
- ✓ John 14:31 – I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

So what does all of this really matter to us? Or is it just “high-fallutin” theology that's out of touch with real life? And what does all this about the Son have to do with the gracious will of the Father to reveal the way of salvation to infants?

VIII. Verse 27d – No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son *and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him*.

Since the Father delights in the Son and has given all things into His hand, and *since* the Son loves the Father and always does His Father's will, the only way to come to the Father is through the Son – Jesus Christ. If we cannot come to know God through any of our own wisdom or understanding, then how *can* we know Him? – Only by receiving as a free gift the wisdom and knowledge that comes to us *through* Jesus Christ. He is the one mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5), so that He can say:

- ✓ John 14:6 – I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
- ✓ Acts 4:11-12 – This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

But Jesus is not simply the only way, and the only name, and the only mediator, He is the only *all-sufficient and perfect* way, His is the only *all-sufficient and perfect* name, He is the only *all-sufficient and perfect* mediator. And this is **because** *all things* have been handed over to Jesus by His Father, and **because** no one knows the Son *except* the Father, and **because** no one knows the Father *except* the Son. Now let me reverse the question. Why are these things so important for us to understand? Because Jesus wants us to see that *He* is the only infinitely sufficient Savior who has *within Himself* all that we could ever possibly need for true life and everlasting happiness – and then infinitely more. We come to know the Father not through any of our own wisdom or understanding, but only when we become as infants, and receive (even as an infant receives his mother's milk) the knowledge of the Father through Jesus Christ. And yet all too often, I see people who keep on striving to know God (laboring earnestly, thinking deeply), while all along God is hiding from them the way of salvation. Why? Because it is God's gracious will to reveal

the way of salvation to *infants* – in order that the way of salvation might be open to *all*, whether Greek or Jew, male or female, young or old, educated or uneducated, criminal or public hero, uncivilized or cultured, slave or free (cf. Col. 3:11; Gal. 3:28)! And so with this foundation laid, and with this backdrop in place, I pray that we may read as if for the first time verses 28-30.

IX. Verses 28-30 – Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Who are the ones laboring and heavy laden? Jesus says:

- ✓ Matthew 23:2, 4 – The scribes and the Pharisees... tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

What are these heavy burdens, hard to bear? They are the burdens of seeking to come to know God by our own wisdom and understanding – through our own efforts and exertions. This is always a heavy burden, and hard to bear, because it is actually to *fight against* the gracious will of the Father – and His gracious will is to reveal the way of salvation to infants. So Jesus calls out to all who are laboring and heavy laden, to all who have been seeking to come to God through their own wisdom and understanding, and He says simply: Come to me. Trust in me, like an infant trusts while lying helpless in his mother's arms. Stop your striving, and receive as a free gift from my hand (even as an infant receives his mother's milk) the true revelation, the true wisdom and understanding, the true way of salvation.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. No more anxiety or worry. No more paralyzing uncertainty and fear. No more despair. No more of the mental stress that sends so many people to doctors and hospitals (cf. Hendriksen). Rest. *Assurance* of God's love. *Peace* of conscience. *Joy* in the Holy Spirit. Blessed rest. (cf. LBC Catechism) Come to *Me*, Jesus says, take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart. Lenski says: "The heart of Christ is not haughty and overbearing but humble, stooping down to us" (Isa. 42:1-4; contrast Mat. 23:2, 4-7). And so it stands to reason that all who come to Him will always find that His yoke is *easy* and His burden is *light*. The Pharisees were always talking about how people needed to wear the "yoke of the Law." The Pharisees called people to the Law. But when Jesus calls us, He calls us to *Himself*. *He* is the Son of the Father. He is the one in whom the Father delights, and into whose hand the Father has given all things. He is the one who loves the Father and always does His Father's will. *He* is the only infinitely sufficient Savior who has *within Himself* all that we could ever possibly need for everlasting rest, and peace, and joy. In light of all these things, His commandments are never a laborious duty (1 Jn. 5:3), but only and always a delight and a joy (Psalm 119:47, 72).

Conclusion

Nowhere do we see the gentle and lowly heart of the Savior more than when He called out to all, and said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". Are you

weary of trying to come to know God through your own wisdom and understanding – through your own efforts and exertions? Won't you stop your striving? Won't you simply *receive* (like an infant baby) that which has always been offered to you *freely*? It is *because* of God's gracious will that the way of salvation should be open to *any* and to *all*... *this* is *why* He hides the way of salvation from the wise and understanding, and reveals it only to infants. And so even today, Jesus calls out to you through His word: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But these verses don't just apply to the unsaved. They apply to every Christian who has ever started to depend on his own efforts and abilities. They apply to every Christian who has ever begun to labor again under the heavy burden of being wise in his own eyes. We must come to Jesus again, and again, and again, and find over, and over, and over again the *rest* that He has promised. We will always struggle with the sin that threatens to turn us from infant babies into the "wise and understanding". But as we struggle, we can rejoice that in choosing to reveal the way of salvation to infants, God opened the way of salvation to *any* and to *all* – including *us*. "Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."