

THE KINGDOM BY FORCE

MATTHEW 11



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T . M . M O O R E

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Kingdom by Force: Matthew 11
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Matthew 11: Introduction

When we think of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and His peaceable Kingdom, about the last thing that comes to mind is violence.

Yet Jesus said the Kingdom both exerts violence, and that violent people take it by force.

He was talking about the kind of spiritual violence that goes into seeking the Kingdom and laboring in the yoke with Jesus. And strangely enough, such violence leads to rest.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Faltering Faith?

Pray Psalm 40.11-13.

Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O LORD;
Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me.
For innumerable evils have surrounded me;
My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up;
They are more than the hairs of my head;
Therefore my heart fails me.
Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;
O LORD, make haste to help me!

Sing Psalm 40.11-13.

(Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

Keep Your mercy not from me; let Your love and truth prevail.
Evil and iniquity make my trembling heart to fail.
Lord, be pleased to rescue me! Let my shelter with You be.

Read and meditate on Matthew 11.1-6.

Prepare.

1. John 10 records the “first sending” of messengers from Jesus. This passage might be seen as the “second sending”. Why?
2. What did Jesus tell John’s disciples to tell him?

Meditate.

The disciples had now been properly instructed and sent. We don’t know where each pair of disciples was told to go, but we can assume it was to different towns and villages. As they left, Jesus began to follow after them, “to teach and to preach in their cities.” I take *their* to mean the cities He had assigned to them. Thus, in a certain way, these disciples were functioning in a role not unlike that of John the Baptist, preparing people for the coming of Him Who had invested them with such power and good news. Our own callings are like that as well, as we prepare the world for the coming of our Lord, soon and very soon.

I do not agree with commentators and preachers who see in this passage an indication that John the Baptist’s faith was faltering. John was simply doing, by a different means, what he had been doing from the beginning of his ministry: directing people to Jesus.

During his time of imprisonment, prior to his murder by King Herod, some of John’s disciples remained with him. We would expect that. But John must have known that he had come to the end of his journey, and he wanted all his disciples to connect with Jesus. Otherwise, when he was gone, they would have nothing. So he sent two of his disciples – who would no doubt have heard about Jesus and His works – to hear from Jesus Himself whether He was the “Coming One”.

I suspect that this question was not lingering in John’s mind; rather, I believe it must have been troubling the minds of those disciples who were still attached to him. John chose a strategy he had used from the beginning, as he sent two of his disciples to “come and see” Jesus for themselves (Jn. 1.29-39).

Jesus turned John's disciples into messengers of the Kingdom. He sent them back to John to report on the things they had seen and heard. This is just what He did with His disciples. Here he made two men messengers, and sent them back to John to tell *in their own words and from their own observation* what Jesus had done. Can't you see the pleased smile emerging on John's face as these brothers excitedly reported, in the presence of John's remaining disciples, what they had seen and heard? Like those disciples on the road to Emmaus, these two would have had their hearts warmed and assured; their voices would have been charged with conviction and passion. And the other disciples of John who heard them would have wanted to beat a path to Jesus, post haste.

Precisely as John intended.

Reflect.

1. Why was it important that the disciples of John see and hear *at first hand* Jesus and His work? Is that important for us?
2. In what ways is our mission to our Personal Mission Field like that of Jesus' disciples and the disciples of John?
3. What should we say to people who doubt that Jesus is the "Coming One"?

John asks this not because he is ignorant but to guide others who are ignorant and to say to them, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Jerome (347-420), *Commentary on Matthew 2:11.3*

Lord, today as I go out into my Personal Mission Field, I want my world to know that...

Pray Psalm 40.1-10.

How will the Lord use you today? Let these verses prepare you for the day ahead, so that you go into it as a faithful messenger of Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalm 40.1-10.

Psalm 40.1-10 (Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,
lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save.

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.
Countless wonders, Lord, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.
Lord, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e'er compare.

Off'rings You do not require – open now my ears, O Lord!
What from me do You desire? Firm delight to do Your Word.
Take my life in ev'ry part; write Your Law upon my heart.

Lord, Your truth will I proclaim to Your people gathered 'round,
nor will I my lips restrain – let Your precious ways resound!
Of Your saving grace and Word I would speak, most loving Lord.

2 None Greater

Pray Psalm 126.4, 5.

Bring back our captivity, O Lord,
as the streams in the South.
Those who sow in tears
shall reap in joy.

Sing Psalm 126.4, 5.

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King!
Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing
who sow while yet they weep and wail.

Read Matthew 11.1-12; meditate on verses 7-11.

Prepare.

1. What did Jesus say about John the Baptist?
2. Who is greater than John?

Meditate.

Jesus certainly did not think that John's faith had faltered by sending his two disciples to ask Jesus whether He was the Coming One. Jesus knew the greatness of John the Baptist. But he was great in the eyes of God and Christ, not in the eyes of men. He didn't wear the finest clothes. He did not alter his views or message to suit the shifting winds of morality. And he didn't break under the pressure of being challenged by those who would ultimately murder his Lord.

Jesus said John was a prophet. Well, that's some pretty good company: Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and all the rest. But Jesus said John was *even more than a prophet*. Not only did he proclaim the Word of God faithfully, but he was the appointed forerunner of the Messiah, the one concerning whom Malachi had written, the last of God's Old Testament prophets (Mal. 3.1). He was more than a prophet because he, more than any prophets before him, prepared the world for Christ. He was more than a prophet because he saw Jesus, baptized Jesus, pointed the world to Jesus, and shifted the focus of those who followed him to following Jesus, Whom John had come to proclaim.

No wonder Jesus said that John is the greatest person to be born prior to the coming of the Kingdom. That, by the way, would include Abraham, Moses, David, all the prophets, and even Jesus' own mother. Yet the coming of the Kingdom is an event of such qualitative distinction, that even the person who is *least* in the Kingdom is greater than John – and, by implication, greater than all those others, too.

How can that be? Because neither John nor any of the others who preceded him had the benefit of Christ living in them by the power of the Holy Spirit. We who know Jesus, who have entered His Kingdom and are in pursuit of His righteousness – we have the Spirit of Christ, Who is at work within us to will and do of God's good pleasure in transforming us increasingly into the likeness of Jesus (Phil. 2.13; 2 Cor. 3.12-18).

When you think of John the Baptist, think *greatness*. Then thank our Lord and praise Him that your potential for Kingdom greatness exceeds even that of John.

Reflect.

1. Why was John so great? What can we learn from John about our own mission in the world?
2. What's the difference between *least* in the Kingdom and *great* in the Kingdom (cf. Matt. 5.17-19)?
3. Should you care about whether you are *least* or *great* in the Kingdom? Explain.

*But was it also the task of a prophet to recognize God while he was still implanted in the womb? It is the task of a prophet to receive prophecy in exchange for a worthy way of life and faith. But was it the task of a prophet to be made a prophet before being made a man and before receiving any reward? It is the task of a prophet to receive blessing from God. But is it the task of a prophet to confer the blessing of baptism on God? It is the task of a prophet to speak of Christ before his time. But is it the task of a prophet to stand face to face with Christ and point him out with his finger? It is the task of a prophet to give prophecies about God. But is it the task of a prophet that God should make prophecies about the prophet himself, as when he says, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face?" Anonymous (no date), *Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 27**

Lord, You have saved me for greatness, greater than the greatness of John. Help me today to...

Pray Psalm 126.1-6.

How will you sow for the Lord and His Kingdom today? Commit your day to the Lord, to let your Kingdom greatness shine to the world.

Sing Psalm 126.1-6.

Psalm 126.1-6 (Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

When God restored our fortunes all,
we were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled,
made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said,
"The Lord has done great things for them!"
Indeed, great things our God has done,
Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King!
Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing
who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow
and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav'nly home,
and bring the harvest of their land.

3 Take It by Force

Pray Psalm 22.23-25.

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

Sing Psalm 22.23-25.

(Darwall: [*Rejoice, the Lord is King*](#))

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,
Nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

Read Matthew 11.1-15; meditate on verses 12-15.

Prepare.

1. How did Jesus describe the coming of the Kingdom?
2. How do people “take” the Kingdom?

Meditate.

OK, get strapped in and hold on tight.

Jesus makes two shocking claims here. The first is that the Kingdom of God “employs violence”. The Greek verb, βιάζεται, *biazetai*, can mean “suffers violence”, as NKJV has it here. But the larger context of Matthew’s gospel suggests that the second meaning of this verse, *employs violence*, should be preferred. Let’s review.

Remember that Jesus began His earthly ministry by confronting and binding the devil (Matt. 4.1-11). Then He strode into the devil’s domain and began throwing the blackguards out, casting out demons, sending them into swine, reversing the effects of sin, sending death packing, and shocking the lie-filled world with the truth of the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy.

This is the kind of violence we associate with the Kingdom of God.

As the Kingdom of God comes to earth, spiritual power is exerted in ways that upset the world (cf. Acts 17.6). People’s settled ways of thinking are dismantled; their preferred lifestyles are razed; cultures, societies, institutions, and moral templates are remade. Yet the power that does all this is *spiritual*, and works on the souls of people, rather than against their bodies. From the soul through the body, that power bears on all aspects of life, as the Lord Jesus makes all things new.

Consider the apostle Paul. The light of the coming Kingdom knocked him to the ground, tore out his heart of stone and implanted a heart of flesh, exposed the folly of his worldview, and changed the entire course of his life. And Paul insisted that his experience is to be regarded as an example for all believers (1 Tim. 1.16).

If the Gospel of the Kingdom does not exert holy spiritual violence for righteousness, peace, and joy against your sinful soul, then you have not entered it, and you need to “take it by force” and delay no longer. That’s the second shocking claim. Gaining the Kingdom means exerting ourselves continually in seeking that which the Lord is all too eager for us to have. It means capturing all our time for the Kingdom, taking every thought captive for obedience to Christ, subduing wayward affections, overhauling priorities, and learning the ways of the Kingdom in all we say and do.

As Elijah called down the violence of God against the pagan worldview of ancient Israel, so John the Baptist tapped the hydrants of heaven to unleash the living water of the Kingdom not of this world. And Jesus came to show and declare that the Kingdom was at hand. Get ready.

Reflect.

1. How do you experience the holy spiritual violence of the Kingdom, coming in your life?
2. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to take the Kingdom “by force”?
3. How do you interpret Jesus’ warning in verse 15?

A vast assembly of men is now collected, as if men were rushing violently forward to seize the kingdom of God; for, aroused by the voice of one man, they come together in crowds, and receive, not only with eagerness, but with vehement impetuosity, the grace which is offered to them. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Matthew 11.12*

Work violently in my soul, O Lord, that I may with holy spiritual violence...

Pray Psalm 22.26-28.

Pray that God will use you today to encourage a fellow believer and bear witness to an unbelieving friend, as you seek the Kingdom and righteousness of God with holy spiritual violence.

Sing Psalm 22.26-28.

Psalm 22.26-28 (Darwall, [*Rejoice, the Lord is King*](#))

The suffering King shall eat and praise with us the Lord.

Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.

Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord;

All those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.

The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

4 Wisdom Justified

Pray Psalm 31.1-5.

In You, O LORD, I put my trust;
Let me never be ashamed;
Deliver me in Your righteousness.
Bow down Your ear to me,
Deliver me speedily;
Be my rock of refuge,
A fortress of defense to save me.
For You *are* my rock and my fortress;
Therefore, for Your name's sake,
Lead me and guide me.
Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,
For You *are* my strength.
Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

Sing Psalm 31.1-5.

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want*](#))

In You, O Lord, I refuge take; let me not come to shame!
In righteousness deliver me, according to Your Name.
Incline Your ear, my prayer to hear, my Fortress strong to save!

For You my Rock and Fortress are; in Your Name lead and guide.
You rescue me from ev'ry net which wicked men might hide.
My Refuge strong, my spirit long in Your hand shall abide.

Read Matthew 11.1-19; meditate on verses 16-19

Prepare.

1. How did people respond to John and Jesus?
2. How is wisdom justified?

Meditate.

Jim Kennedy would illustrate the many flimsy excuses people gave for not believing the Gospel, by telling about a man who came to borrow his neighbor's plow, only to be told, "I'd love to lend it to you, but my wife's combing her hair with it right now." To which the astonished neighbor replied, "Your wife is combing her hair with your plow?" Then the explanation, "Well, not really, but when you don't want to do something, one excuse is as good as another."

Jesus might have told this story to the people who heard Him. It didn't seem to matter what John or He did or said, people had a ready excuse for not believing. John was too ascetic, they insisted. Jesus, too liberal (v. 18). It didn't matter what tune John or Jesus played, some folks just weren't going to join the dance (v. 17). They considered themselves wiser than John or Jesus, and not in need of any repentance or faith; their preferred religious traditions suited them just fine.

Were they really wise in thinking this? Jesus insisted that "wisdom is justified by her works" (not

children, as in NKJV). What a strange and enigmatic summary of this teaching! What did He mean?

Let's not allow ourselves to be misled by the feminine pronoun *her*. Its antecedent is *wisdom*, which in both Hebrew and Greek is a feminine noun. In English, we don't classify our nouns as masculine, feminine, or neuter. They're just nouns. Other languages use gender for various nouns, and in both Greek and Hebrew, nouns which are abstract – like *wisdom* – are typically feminine. This does not suggest gender as we normally think of it. However, since wisdom gives birth to good works; thus, *wisdom* was considered to be a feminine noun.

Actually the “wisdom” Jesus refers to here is Himself. We'll see who's really wise, Jesus was saying. His message and His mission are justified by the many good works, first, which He was doing, then, multiplied throughout the ages, that His followers would do in His Name. The Hebrew traditionalists of Jesus' day didn't have many works to boast about. Nor do those who, for whatever shabby reason, reject Jesus today.

They may all excuse themselves from believing, but our calling is to continue to show and tell them the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

Reflect.

1. Why are people reluctant to believe in Jesus?
2. What excuses have you heard from people who do not want to believe the Gospel?
3. What would you point to in your own life as justification for the Gospel?

Jesus is Wisdom itself not because of his acts of power but by his very nature. Everything has capability, but capability is demonstrated in actions. Thus an act of goodness is not the same as goodness itself, just as an effect is distinguishable from its cause. Hilary of Poitiers (315-367), On Matthew 9.9

Help me to be more effective in making the Good News known, O Lord, especially today as I...

Pray Psalm 31.19-24.

How will the goodness of the Lord show through you today? Commit your day to the Lord. Bask in His steadfast love, and seek His guidance for doing the good works of the Gospel today.

Sing Psalm 31.19-24.

Psalm 31.19-24 (Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want*](#))

How great the goodness You reserve for those who fear You, Lord,
Who rest in You and boldly stand before men in Your Word.
You cover them from plots of men; You shelter them, O Lord!

Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown His steadfast love to me!
In my alarm I cried to Him; He heard my fervent plea!
In fear and dread with You I pled; You heard and rescued me!

O love the Lord, all you, His saints! He keeps us faithfully.
But all who act in sinful pride His wrath shall surely see.
Be strong and let your heart not fret; wait on Him constantly!

5 Rebuking Unrepentant Cities

Pray Psalm 149.5-9.

Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.
Let the high praises of God *be* in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
To execute on them the written judgment—
This honor have all His saints.
Praise the LORD!

Sing Psalm 149.5-9.

(Toulon: [*I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))

Sing to the Lord, exult with great delight!
Sing on your beds with joy to God by night!
Sing praise and take His Word into your hand.
Publish His grace and wrath in every land!

Read Matthew 11.1-24; meditate on verse 20-24.

Prepare.

1. Why did Jesus rebuke these cities?
2. What does this suggest about the good works Jesus calls us to do?

Meditate.

The psalmist declared that the goodness of the Lord is in all the earth (Ps. 33.5). We don't have to look very far to see evidence of this. In His coming, Jesus hyper-exaggerated the goodness of God for the dramatic effect of demonstrating that, in His Kingdom, bringing the goodness of God to light in the land of the living is a primary concern of Kingdom people (Eph. 2.8-10; Ps. 27.13). The good works Jesus did are to be reproduced in His followers, thus justifying Jesus as the Wisdom of God, and His rule as the way of righteousness (Matt. 11.19).

Paul said that the goodness of God leads people to repentance (Rom. 2.4, 5). This is why good works matter so much, and why, as Jesus promised, the good works His people do in every age and place will be so many more than those He was able to do during His short time on earth (Jn. 14.12).

The world has a responsibility in the face of such good works: People must acknowledge the goodness of God and repent of their sins. Where that doesn't happen – as in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum in Jesus' day – the judgment of God awaits. Some of that wrath falls in the here and now (Rom. 1.18-32). The most devastating judgment of God, however, is stored up for the day of judgment (v. 24). Here is another mention of that coming day (cf. 7.21-23).

We are reminded that the Good News is not good except in the light of the bad news of the coming judgment of God. God is continuously witnessing to His love through His goodness, including that

which His people do. To fail to acknowledge that goodness, repent of all that is contrary to it, and believe in the Good News of the Kingdom, is to consign oneself to wrath now and eternal judgment to come. With all the love we can muster, we need to make this clear.

Reflect.

1. Why is it so important that Christians do good works?
2. How can we help people see and acknowledge God's goodness?
3. Why is the coming judgment of God part of the Good News of the Kingdom?

*These were cities where Jesus was prone to linger as a favored place. And not even at this does he hold back his speech. He makes their dread even more intense by saying that they would suffer things more grievous than Sodom and Tyre. Jesus alarmed them when he used every possible means to reclaim them to repentance. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 37.4**

Lord, lead me today into many good works, and help me to...

Pray Psalm 149.1-4.

Rejoice in the salvation of Jesus, and commit this day to showing His goodness and proclaiming His truth to the people in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 149.1-4.

Psalm 149.1-4 (Toulon: [*I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))

Sing to the Lord a glorious song and new!
Praise Him you people, to Whom praise is due!
Let us rejoice, let us be glad in Him
Who has created us and cleansed our sin.

Praise Him with dance, with tambourine and lyre!
To be so praised is God's one great desire.
Lord, beautify Your holy ones with grace;
show us the mercy of Your saving face.

6 Standing Invitation

Pray Psalm 84.8-12.

O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*
O God, behold our shield,
And look upon the face of Your anointed.
For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.
O LORD of hosts,
Blessed is the man who trusts in You!

Sing Psalm 84.8-12.

(Holy Manna: [Brethren, We Have Met to Worship](#))

Lord of hosts, my prayer receiving, hear me, help me by Your grace!
In Your courts I stand believing; turn to me Your glorious face!
Lord, our sun, our shield, our glory, no good thing will You deny
to those who proclaim Your story, and who on Your grace rely.

Read Matthew 11.1-30; meditate on verses 25-30.

Prepare.

1. How can someone come to the Father?
2. How can we have our burdens lifted and know peace and rest?

Meditate.

This passage divides into three sections, each equally important. The first provides a lesson about prayer; the second reminds us of the uniqueness of Jesus; and the third offers a beautiful metaphor for discipleship.

Our passage occurs at the conclusion of Jesus' rebuke to the unrepentant cities, and His warning of judgment to come. Jesus offers a prayer of thanksgiving to His Father (vv. 25, 26). He doesn't withdraw to pray; instead, He simply gives thanks before all the people around Him. It seems to me as if Jesus' running conversation with His Father, which must have been continuous, broke through here for a moment, giving us a glimpse into His prayer life. It is a most natural bit of apostrophe, and points back to the "these things" He talked about in this chapter: Is He the Messiah? How does one enter the Kingdom? How do we avoid the judgment of God? We're reminded that such "hidden things" are revealed to those who receive them like babes, trusting, without having to figure everything out.

Second, Jesus explains that God has given "all things" into His care and authority, and He reveals them to whomever He will – those who receive them like babes. The revelation of the Father that Jesus provides will not come to those who keep demanding reasons, explanations, answers to

objections, and the like. The heart, not the mind, is ground zero for conversion to Christ. Jesus reveals Himself and His salvation to those who are humble in faith and obedience. As we think of the people we want to come to Jesus, let's not spend too much time boning up on the best arguments and mind-tricks. Let's pray that God would humble them to hear Jesus, open their hearts to His sweetness and power, and enable them to believe.

Finally, Jesus calls us to rest with Him in the hard work of plowing furrows for Kingdom seed. He is with us as we take up the work of the Kingdom, walking and directing and sharing in every step. We must join with Him in the "easy" yoke of obedience to God's Word, keeping our eyes on every next step and sowing the good seed of the Kingdom day by day. Gentle and lowly like Him, we will do our work faithfully, bearing our burdens with joy, and laboring to prepare our Personal Mission Field for His Kingdom. The rest we seek, and the relief from all tedium, trouble, and tumult, comes from joining Jesus in His work of restoring the world for the Kingdom of God.

Notice the centrality of Jesus in each of these texts: He is the Son of the Father and key to knowing the mysteries of God and His Kingdom. And He strengthens and guides us in the light burden of seeking and advancing His rule on earth as it is in heaven. Does He occupy that central place in our lives?

Reflect.

1. Why does Jesus only reveal the "hidden things" of God to "babes"?
2. How do you know when you're walking with Jesus in His "easy" yoke?
3. What are the best ways to learn the gentleness and lowliness of Jesus?

You are to "take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." You are not learning from me how to refashion the fabric of the world, nor to create all things visible and invisible, nor to work miracles and raise the dead. Rather, you are simply learning of me: "that I am meek and lowly in heart." If you wish to reach high, then begin at the lowest level. If you are trying to construct some mighty edifice in height, you will begin with the lowest foundation. This is humility. Augustine (354-430), Sermon 69.2

Grant that I may walk with You today, Jesus, so that together we may...

Pray Psalm 84.1-7.

Pray for strength, that you may be a living sacrifice for the Lord today in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 84.1-7.

Psalm 84.1-7 (Holy Manna: [*Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*](#))

Lord of hosts, how sweet Your dwelling; how my soul longs for Your courts!
Let my soul with joy keep telling of Your grace forever more.
Like a bird upon the altar, let my life to You belong.
Blessed are they who never falter as they praise Your grace with song!

Blessed are they whose strength is founded in Your strength, O Lord above.
All whose hearts in You are grounded journey in Your strength and love.
Though they weep with tears of sadness, grace shall all their way sustain.
In Your presence, filled with gladness, they shall conquer all their pain.

7 Kingdom Rest

Pray Psalm 110.3, 4.

Your people *shall be* volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.
The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
“You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”

Sing Psalm 110.3, 4.

(Aurelia: The Church’s One Foundation)
Filled with the Spirit’s power, in holy robes of love,
from early morning’s hour they serve their Lord above.
Christ reigns a priest forever, the King of Righteousness
and King of Peace who ever His chosen ones will bless.

Read and meditate on Matthew 11.1-30.

Prepare.

1. What do we learn in this chapter about the Kingdom of God?
2. Where can we find rest for our souls?

Meditate.

This chapter begins with violence – the hint of it in John’s situation, and the spiritual violence involved in entering the Kingdom of God – and ends in rest and peace. These are not opposing ideas where the Kingdom of God is concerned.

We must always bear in mind that spiritual forces of wickedness in high places are loath to yield ground to the advancing Kingdom of God. They will put up a fight at every turn to keep us from realizing more of the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Spirit that Christ has called us to in His Kingdom. We need to deal violently with them, recognizing their wiles, resisting their schemes and distractions, wielding all the weapons of our warfare (Eph. 6.10-20), and pressing on in the yoke with Jesus to plow new furrows for the Kingdom in our Personal Mission Field.

There will be resistance. People are reluctant to admit and repent from their sins, and they may not find our message or our lifestyle to their liking. But we don’t look to the approval of others or agreeable circumstances and conditions for the rest our souls desire. We look to Jesus. Walking with Him, sharing in His reconciling and restoring work, and basking in the sweet, clear light of His revelation, we find all the rest we need, rest that not even the devil and his minions nor the enemies of God in this world can keep us from enjoying.

Let us then in meekness and humility look to Jesus as the Coming One, Whose not-of-this-world Kingdom is bringing a new order of the ages to us and our world.

Reflect.

1. How should we make progress in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God?
2. How can you make sure that you are repenting of all your sins?
3. How can we access more of the “hidden things” Jesus wants to give us?

The Father entrusts. The Son receives. What is entrusted? All things have been entrusted to the Son, but this does not mean cosmically heaven and earth and the elements and the rest of nature which God himself made and established. Rather, it refers personally to the people who have access to the Father through the Son and who were formerly rebellious but afterward began to know God. Jerome (347-420), Commentary on Matthew 2.11.27

Help me make progress in Your Kingdom, Lord, as I...

Pray Psalm 110.1-3, 5-7.

Pray that the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ will come more fully in your life, and through you, to all the people of your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 110.1-3, 5-7.

Psalm 110.1-3, 5-7 (Aurelia: *The Church's One Foundation*)

“Sit by Me at My right hand,” the Lord says to my Lord,
“until I make Your foot stand on all who hate Your Word.”

From in His Church the Savior rules all His enemies;
while those who know His favor go forth the Lord to please.

The Lord at Your right hand, Lord, in wrath shall shatter kings,
when judgment by His strong Word He to the nations brings.
Then, all His foes defeated, He takes His hard-won rest,
in glorious triumph seated with us, redeemed and blessed!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What kind of violence does seeking the Kingdom require?
2. Why is the warning of judgment an important part of the Gospel?
3. What is repentance? Why is it necessary?
4. How do we learn from Jesus?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 11.1-30? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.