

Christmas time is the perfect time to think about God's indulgence. For the next three weeks I get to brag about Jesus, so if you have unbelieving friends or family, this is the perfect time to invite them here. By looking at Jesus' indulgence, we can get a clearer image of God, because in Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead.

In Matthew 11, Jesus says invites those who are weary and tired to come and find rest in Him. It seems to be a simple invitation to be free of the burdens of this life and take hold of a restful life in Jesus. We are all burdened, not in the sense that we are always in despair and losing hope, but we are all a bit tired of what we have to deal with in this life – work, traffic, and other hardships. But this verse means more in its context than just a call for us to find rest from this life.

Matthew 10 is one of the five sermons that Matthew highlights. In chapter 11:1, Matthew writes, "After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples..." This is the signal that what came before was one of these five sermons. In this sermon, he sent his disciples two by two to evangelize. Jesus instructed his disciples only to preach to Jews, not Gentiles. The reason is because He wanted to give the Jews "first dibs" are receiving their king, since Jesus was first and foremost the King of Israel. However, instead of receiving Him, they rejected Him, crucifying Him. The stubbornness of their hearts and refusal to repent prohibited them from receiving their Messiah.

In Chapter 11, John the Baptist asks if Jesus is truly the Savior. Jesus cites all of the miracles done amongst the people, substantiating His identity. Israel should have believed because of the miraculous signs that accompanied the ministry of Jesus. But they refused to recognize the signs that their salvation had arrived.

Furthermore, in verse 7-10, Jesus explains that John was the prophet who was to announce His coming: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Kings would send an announcer ahead of them to whatever town they were going. It was expected that the people in that town would listen and prepare. But the Jews ignored the announcer, John, and refused to prepare for Jesus' arrival.

And in verses 16-19, Jesus compares the Jews to children crying in the marketplace. One group plays a joyful tune on the flute, but the other children refuse to dance and play along. So,

the first group plays a mournful song instead, trying to get the second group to mourn and play along. Again, the other children refuse to mourn too. Similarly, God first sent John, who was ascetic and extremely austere and pious. But the Jews called him a demon. So Jesus did something different. He ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners. But the Jews then called him a glutton and a drunk, a friend of sinners. God tried to reach to them one way, and they rejected Him, so He went the other way, and they still rejected Him. God did everything possible to reach out to them, and they still were stubborn. What more could He have done?

Jesus, in verse 20, mourns for the cities that saw His miracles and refused to repent. He reflects on all the signs that were performed in the cities of Israel, but with no result. How could they be so stubborn and hard-hearted? At this point, just when you would expect Jesus to give up on the Israelites, to mourn for them and their wicked ways and move on, He surprises all of us and again reaches out to them. He does so with the wonderful invitation in 11:28, the invitation for rest. We know that when Jesus speaks of those who are “weary and burdened,” He’s thinking first and foremost of Jesus because 1) the entire chapter is about the Jewish reaction to the Messiah, 2) there was no one more burdened than the Jews, who are burdened by the Law, and lastly, 3) Jesus’ reference to a yoke alluded to the well-known Israelite history of captivity in Egypt (a “yoke of slavery”). He was speaking to His Jewish people again when He invited them to find rest in Him. In other words, just when all of us may have given up on this stiff-necked people, Jesus extended His arms toward them again.

This passage shows us Jesus’ character. He reached out to the Jews in every possible way. And despite their rejection, He reached out again. This is the same way He treats us. Despite our sin, rejection, and refusal to repent, Jesus keeps reaching out to us. He never gives up on us. He is our Savior, and He wants to give us the eternal rest that this world cannot give. Praise be to such an unbelievably indulgent Savior!