

NT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 10 “Take My Yoke upon You, and Learn of Me”

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Matt 11:28-30

28 Come unto me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light.

v25-27 These three verses are a clarion call to come to the Father by the Son (cf. v. 27, note the JST/IV on v. 27 in the LDS KJV footnote), they summon all of the humble and “foolish” of the world (cf. v. 25-26). These verses draw heavily on OT rhetoric and paraphrase a number of messianic OT passages.

v28 Jesus is summoning people to come unto him so he may recommend them to the Father, and they obtain His rest, cf. D&C 15:6.

“Come unto me”, paraphrasing the summons found in Isa. 55:3. The Son is the only way to the Father, so one must go to him to approach the Father.

“all ye that labour and are heavy laden”, this would be the toil and cares of the world that people slave under, Isa. 46:1. We are told to abandon these things and approach the Lord, cp. Ps. 55:22. Naturally, people being cruelly oppressed would be those who have the cares of the world imposed upon them, cp. Mosiah 24:8-15.

“I will give you rest”, cp. Isa. 14:3. The promise of the covenant is to live in peace and comfort, with no fear of oppressors, enemies, sickness, famine, cf. Lev. 26:3-12, Deut. 28:1-13.

v29 Jesus doesn't tell people that they don't have to do anything once they are his disciples. What they are doing is trading a lifestyle of slaving after material things for a life of slaving after spiritual goals. This isn't easy, as Matt. 5:10-12 warns us, but the promises associated with it will land your soul in a place of happiness and joy. Jesus is telling people that they are under a yoke regardless, so they need to choose the yoke that will serve them best.

“my yoke”, the yoke is a symbol of servitude or slavery in the OT when used metaphorically in reference to people, cf. Gen. 27:40, Lev. 26:13, Deut. 28:14.

“ye shall find rest unto your souls”, a quotation of Jer. 6:16. This quotation is particularly poignant as they share the same context as that of v. 25-27. In Jeremiah 6 the Lord is summoning a rebellious Israel that will not heed Him or His prophets, and so is the case in v. 25-27 with the “wise and prudent”.

v30 paraphrases and compounds a number of messianic passages from Isaiah, cf. Isa. 9:4, Isa. 10:27, Isa. 14:25.

Matt 12:1-13

1 AT that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw [it], they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. 3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; 4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? 6 But I say unto you, That in this place is [one] greater than the temple. 7 But if ye had known what [this] meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: 10 And, behold, there was a man which had [his] hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. 11 And he said unto them, what man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift [it] out? 12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. 13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched [it] forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

v1-8 Comments on Mark 2:23-28 Matthew's account of this text is more verbose, cf. Matt. 12:1-7, but v. 27 of Mark's account is unique. If we insert Matthew's unique material into Mark's account, it would read as follows:

And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

The overt subject is keeping the Sabbath holy, the underlying subject is that of fault-finding. The Pharisees are looking for any excuse possible to fault Jesus, and in so doing indict themselves.

Jesus and his disciples walk among corn fields on the Sabbath and pick some ears to eat them (v. 23, cf. Lev. 23:22). The Pharisees accuse them of violating the Sabbath (v. 24). Jesus then discourses on the nature of the Sabbath and makes it clear they do not understand it (v. 25-27, see also Matt. 12:5-7 for additional unique material). Jesus concludes his statement by pronouncing himself Lord of the Sabbath (v. 28).

The discussion in v. 25-27 is more clear when fleshed out by Matt. 12:5-7. Jesus is saying the Sabbath was created as a blessing for mankind, and so it is inferior to the man, it was created for him. Thus, there are certain Laws which are above the Sabbath Law, such as circumcision, and obviously maintaining life by eating. The accusation of harvesting on the Sabbath, which is prohibited by the Law, is simply overinflated nonsense. Had the Pharisees understood what the phrase “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice” (cf. Hosea 6:6) means they would not have accused Jesus and his disciples of violating the Sabbath.

Jesus’ quotation of Hosea 6:6 at the Pharisees is a scathing attack on their hypocrisy as the context of Hosea 6 is the condemnation of those who focus on the physical act of sacrificing while all the while violating the Law. Thus, using imagery of Hosea 6, Jesus is casting himself in the role of the prophet who is slaying with the word of God, and the Pharisees are the hypocritical Israelite (i.e., Northern Ten Tribes) sacrificers who are about to be smitten. They are nit-picking him on the unscriptural Sabbath rules only in an effort to detect flaws and accuse him, and in so doing they violate the Law.

Verse 28 presents the replacement theme of the Law for the Gospel. This is made clear in Matt. 12:6 when Jesus states there is one among them who is greater than the Temple, also cp. John 1:51. Such statements emphasize the ignorance of the Pharisees in perceiving what these physical acts and edifices represent, they do not grasp the spiritual meaning because they are not spiritual. They are carnal men who focus on physical worship because they do not spiritually worship.

Being Lord of the Sabbath also has larger theological implications as well. Jesus is the Creator and therefore Lord of the first Sabbath day wherein all mankind was created and is thereby Lord over all mankind, cf. D&C 77:12. So, if the Lord is greater than man, and man is greater than the Sabbath, then the Lord is greater than the Sabbath.

v9-13 Jesus is in a synagogue (v. 9) where there is a man present who has a withered hand. The Pharisees, who are looking to get Jesus into trouble, ask him if healing on the Sabbath is acceptable (v. 10). His response is that it is lawful to save life, even animal life, on the Sabbath (v. 11). And man is above the animal, so it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath (v. 12). Jesus then has the afflicted man stretch his hand out and it is miraculously healed (v. 13).

Jesus’ reply to them is quite sophisticated, but his healing of the man is even more sophisticated. Jesus does nothing overt to heal the man, there is no laying on of hands, no physical act except speaking. The man is the one who stretches out his hand. Thus, Jesus

rebukes the Pharisees for their bad doctrine and fault-finding, but then goes on to not even lift a finger to perform this miraculous healing. The Pharisees have nothing to accuse Jesus with, he made no overt act to heal the man. He rebukes them and then leaves them not a straw to grasp at.

v9 “their synagogue”, apparently the same synagogue as the Pharisees from v. 2.

v10 “a man which had his hand withered”, it would appear the man did not approach Jesus asking for the healing. The text suggests the Pharisees were the ones who instigated the matter. Was the man there to be healed by Jesus? Given Jesus doesn’t even question the man’s faith or motives, it seems likely he was. Would Jesus heal the man just to spite the Pharisees even if he had no faith? That doesn’t seem likely as faith is usually, but not always, presented as the essential ingredient in such healings.

“Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?”, the Pharisees’ argument here is underlain by the fact that the man’s affliction is not life threatening and has apparently been with him for a long time, perhaps since birth. Why then not just wait until tomorrow to heal the man and avoid the risk of profaning the Sabbath? Jesus’ reply addresses their underlying “It isn’t life threatening” argument by presenting the sheep in the pit, a case which is also not life threatening (if the sheep were to fall into a pit with water it would drown before rescued so that isn’t an issue). If it is lawful to help out only a sheep when it is not life threatening, then it is lawful to help out a human when it is not life threatening.

v11 “sheep...fall into a pit”, the Luke 14:5 account has “an ass or an ox” (a better translation would be “who’s son or ox”) and is the source for the famous Mormon colloquialism “ox in a mire”, which apparently was originated, or at least popularized, by Spencer W, Kimball:

“I wonder if money earned upon the Sabbath, when it is unnecessary Sabbath earning, might not also be unclean money. I realize that some people must work on the Sabbath; and when they do, if they are compelled, that is, of course, a different situation. But men and women who will deliberately use the Sabbath day to develop business propositions, to increase their holdings, to increase their income, I fear for them.... There are people who work on the Sabbath, not through compulsion, but because the income is attractive, and others who work voluntarily to get the ‘time and a half’ that Sabbath work gives them.... The Savior knew that the ox gets in the mire on the Sabbath, but he knew also that no ox deliberately goes into the mire every week.” (Spencer W. Kimball, CR, October 1953, pp. 54-56.)

Unfortunately, it seem the “ox in a mire” is used more often to falsely justify precisely what Kimball was arguing against, people excusing themselves from observing the Sabbath.

The “mire” is apparently a paraphrase of the KJV “pit”. The Greek term “phrear” refers to a pit filled with water from an underground spring. In an arid environment these springs may be ephemeral, and so the pits may be dry, filled with water, or a quagmire of mud depending upon season and local conditions.

Luke 7:36-50

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that [Jesus] sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38 And stood at his feet behind [him] weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe [them] with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed [them] with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw [it], he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman [this is] that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. 40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that [he], to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped [them] with the hairs of her head. 45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, [the same] loveth little. 48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

v36-50 A Pharisee name Simon invites Jesus to his house for something to eat (v. 36) with a few friends (v. 49), and Jesus does so. While at the table, a local woman comes in and anoints and weeps on Jesus feet, kisses them, and wipes them with her hair, an act of incredible deference (v. 37-38). Apparently the woman is well known to have a bad reputation, and so Simon questions to himself Jesus' inspiration when he permits the woman, who is probably unclean, to touch him (v. 39). Jesus discerns Simon's disapproval so he asks him a hypothetical parable case concerning two debtors (v. 40-42). Simon responds that the one with larger debt forgiven is more thankful and Jesus agrees with him (v. 43). Jesus then goes on to draw a parallel to say the one forgiven the greater debt is the woman, and the one forgiven the smaller debt is Simon, and solidifies the parallel by contrasting their present actions (v. 44-47). Jesus then addresses the woman and tells her that her sins are forgiven (v. 48), to which the others at the table question his ability to do such a thing (v. 49, cp. 5:21). Jesus goes on to identify her faith as the thing that has saved her (v. 50).

The present passage is not the same event as in Matt. 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-8. These latter three accounts are of Simon the leper who is apparently different from Simon the Pharisee. Despite the differences between the two accounts, many Christian

commentators equate these two Simons.

v36 The text does not present Simon with any ulterior motive of entrapment, as is the case in the text above. The invitation appears to be a genuine one, probably by someone who is curious to meet the high profile Jesus. But, at the same time, he appears to be perfectly willing to find fault with Jesus as v. 39 indicates.

v37 “alabaster box”, the intent of the passage is to contrast the woman’s contrition with Simon’s lack of hospitality. The fact that the ointment used was kept in alabaster accentuates its considerable value. In the account of the anointing of Jesus’ head by Mary (cf. Matt. 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-8) the ointment is contained in alabaster and is explicitly identified as being very valuable. Here the value of the ointment is only implicitly identified. Here is the Smith’s Bible Dictionary entry:

Alabaster, occurs in the N.T. only in the notice of the alabaster-box of ointment which a woman brought to out Lord when he sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper at Bethany, the contents of which she poured on the head of the Saviour (Matt. 26:7, Mark 14:3, Luke 7:37). By the English word alabaster is to be understood both that kind which was also known by the name of gypsum, as well as the Oriental alabaster which is so much valued on account of its translucency, and for its variety of colored streakings, red, yellow, grey, &c., which it owes for the most part to the admixture of oxides of iron. The latter is a fibrous carbonate of lime, of which there are many varieties, satin spar being one of the most common. The former is a hydrous sulphate of lime, and forms when calcined and ground [into] the well known and useful substance called plaster of Paris. Both these kinds of alabaster, but especially the latter, are and have been long used for various ornamental purposes, such as the fabrication of vases, boxes, &c. The ancients considered alabaster (carbonate of lime) to be the best material in which to preserve their ointments. “Unguents,” says Pliny, “keep best in alabaster.” In Mark 14:3, the woman who brought “the alabaster-box of ointment of spikenard” is said break the box before pouring out the ointment, which probably means breaking the seal which kept the essence of the perfume from evaporating.

Note Smith equates the Lucan account of the foot anointing with the other gospel accounts of the head anointing.

v39 Simon expects prophets, and therefore Jesus, to be omniscient, which isn’t Scriptural. The irony is his thoughts are being discerned even as he thinks them, and Jesus confronts him over it.

Simon’s concern over the woman touching him is over her being a “sinner”. What her particular sin is we are not told, but whatever it is she is apparently left unclean by it. This would explain Simon’s reaction to Jesus permitting her to touch him.

The concepts of uncleanness had gone from a matter of ritual purity and personal cleanness to a matter of elitism and exclusivity. Simon’s attitude is apparently, “Do not touch me, you are unclean”. The Law’s approach is quite the opposite, the priests and Levites were to be the most ritually pure among Israel, yet they were required to inspect the most unclean among

Israel (cf. Lev. 13) and pronounce them clean when the time came. Requirements such as this in the Law are blatantly anti-elitism, yet the Pharisees had ignored this.

v40-47 When it comes to hypothetical cases the Pharisees can determine what the correct course of action it. When it comes to actually applying it in a practical situation they fail. Confrontations such as this are reminiscent of the parable Nathan caught David in, cf. 2 Sam. 12.

The Pharisees present are focused on obscure laws of justice, and they completely fail to recognize the application of repentance, mercy, and forgiveness.

v44-46 The acts described herein, such as water for the feet, a kiss, and anointing oil, are not requirements according to the Law or Semitic tradition. Rather they are courtesies intended to honor guests you hold in high esteem. Simon wasn't required to do these things, and neither was the woman.

On the water for the feet, cf. Gen. 18:4, Gen. 24:32, Gen. 43:24, John 13:5. On the kiss, cf. Gen. 27:26, Gen. 29:13, Gen. 33:4, Gen. 45:15, Exod. 4:27. On the anointing with oil, cp. Ps. 23:5, Ezek. 16:9.

v47 The matter at hand is not the multitude of sins, but rather the amount of forgiveness sought and obtained. Jesus is not saying Simon has fewer sins than the woman, he is saying that Simon has less forgiveness and therefore less love and thankfulness.

Another point is that her humility, love, and faith are the main thing meriting forgiveness. The acts themselves are indicative of her penitence and humility. Jesus doesn't forgive her for washing and anointing his feet, he forgives her because of her great faith.

v49 Notice Simon is not among those characterized as questioning Jesus at this point. Simon has got to be shocked, and apparently humbled, at the irony of the situation in v. 39 and the rebuke he administered to himself in answering Jesus' parable. This tells us that while Simon is critical of Jesus, he isn't so hard-hearted that he can't be humbled. However, the others present aren't stung as Simon was, so they continue to be critical of Jesus. Their criticism here is the same as that voiced in 5:21.

Luke 13:10-17

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.
11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up [herself]. 12 And when Jesus saw her, he called [her to him], and said unto her, woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.
13 And he laid [his] hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. 15 The Lord then answered him, and said, [Thou] hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or [his] ass from the stall, and lead [him] away to

watering? 16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? 17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Here we have another healing on the Sabbath, but the circumstances are a bit different than that addressed above. Jesus is teaching in a synagogue (v. 10) when he see a woman who has suffered 18 years being stooped over (v. 11). Jesus heals her in front of the whole synagogue by laying on of hands (v. 12-13). The synagogue official is irritated that Jesus has done this on Sabbath and stands up and tells everyone that healing ought not to be done on Sabbath, indirectly rebuking Jesus (v. 14). Jesus' reply is an accusation of hypocrisy, and he states that the healing of a daughter of Israel is more important than many acts they perform on the Sabbath (v. 15-16). The result is Jesus humiliates him, and the people rejoice over Jesus' works (v. 17).

Unlike the Sabbath healing we looked at above, Jesus here actually lays hands on the woman, opening himself up the accusation of working on the Sabbath. Similar to the Sabbath healing above, the person had an affliction that was not life threatening and had been there for a long time. The Pharisee's argument was certainly, "Why didn't you heal her yesterday, or wait until tomorrow?" To which Jesus replies, "Hypocrite! Why didn't you water your animals yesterday, or wait until tomorrow! This woman is more important than your cattle!"

v11 The KJV is obscure, the New American Standard (NAS) reads:

And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.

With regard to the spirit, see the v. 16 reference to Satan.

v14 We would assume the indignation is at least in part envy over the healing. Here is Jesus who is gaining great notoriety and popularity among the people, largely a result of his healing, and the Pharisees are losing people to him.

v15-16 "loose his ox...loosed from this bond", Jesus is rhetorically connecting the two.

v16 "a daughter of Abraham", Jesus is hitting the Pharisees hard on this one. He is reminding them of their responsibility to help and care for the women of Israel, which they are not doing. Instead they are harming and neglecting them. Jesus is invoking the subject of Mal. 2:10-3:5 wherein the Lord accuses the priests of abusing the women of Israel and says he will come to purge the sons of Levi.