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Sermon preached by MR. J. K. POPHAM
on Wednesday evening, 11th March 1936

Text: Matthew XI. v. 28.

"Come unto Me all ye that labour and are
heavy laden and I will give you rest."

This loving, sufficient invitation is given by Christ, and the context is of such importance that I would like to draw your particular attention to it, because it sets forth the grace, the ability, of the blessed Person who issues this invitation. Christ had, as I drew your attention to it, set forth the awfulness of rejecting His Person and His teaching. That does not mean Arminianism, it means the terrible wickedness, ignorance, blindness and enmity of man's nature, fallen. So vile are men, we among them, that Christ coming, opening His mouth, preaching the good things of the gospel, declaring His Father's name, in villages and cities, only awakened enmity and though in His day He was expected, the rulers knew the time would come for Christ to be born, yet because He did not answer their carnal expectations, they rejected Him; said He had a devil; that He was a friend of publicans and sinners.

That sin in the spirit of it is alive to-day in England, at our very hand, our neighbours, all rejection is a very terrible thing and judgement is sure to follow on the rejectors and it will be well for us to consider this fearful thing, for privileges under the gospel, despised will be reckoned with, England will be reckoned with and all individual rejection of this Blessed One, God will take notice of. If any of us here are among those who, while we may profess with our tongues the gospel, yet in our hearts despise Him, will find that when the books are opened and they are judged out of them their conduct will be there, and they won't then plead, what now may be said by some heady Calvinist, we cannot help it, that won't stand. God did not create us with weakness, bitterness, enmity, unbelief. These are sins born in us and God will reckon with them. O you who do not know God may have in your hearts enmity which you hardly acknowledge, God sees it, and I warn you solemnly, as one, as I hope sent of God to speak well for Him, that if you die in your sins, your enmity will be reckoned with, and it will be more tolerable for those who never heard Christ's name, than for you, who, hearing it and hearing the truth, do not obey. And very solemn it is to read this, that when Christ had spoken thus solemnly, He said - "I thank Thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Then He utters these very remarkable words - "All things" - the world, men, devils, providence - "all things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father." The Father has known the Son in the eternal generation of the Son, in the delight He has in the Son, and the delight the Son has in Him, for He, the Son, is in the bosom of the Father, "neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."

Do we feel a desire for this revelation? God give us grace to press after it, for vital religion is a matter of revelation. The knowledge of the Father is by the Son revealing Him. The knowledge of the Son is by the Father revealing Him. They know each other eternally, and the Holy Ghost with them and uttering these great solemn words. Jesus looks in His heart, Omniscience looks upon poor people before Him and says:- "You are burdened; you are labouring." Are you labouring to mend a bad case? Are you labouring to subdue some sins? Are you labouring to fulfil the law and to live by it? Are you labouring under some peculiar affliction? Are you burdened with guilt? Are you burdened because sin overcomes you? because you cannot get near to God as you want, and you set up bars between Himself and you in your unbelief and fear? The only way, the only way to solve these things and be delivered, is coming to Him.

"Come unto Me." This Jesus is the Mighty God. He speaks in Isaiah of His Father. He says, "The Father has digged into My ear, opened Mine ear and I was not rebellious." The Father gave Me words to speak. He did works which I should repeat. In Eternity I saw these works, I heard these words. He has delivered everything to Me and has given Me grace and wisdom. He has anointed Me to preach good tidings. He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give beauty for ashes." We do not like to be turned into ashes, but all people who are burned by the spirit of judgement and by the spirit of burning, get ashes from time to time and that fits them for the beauty. Beauty for ashes - the beauty of God for the ashes of your fallen nature, and poor repenting spirit and of your low estate, and of your solemn and sad feeling. Beauty given you for these things. So this Lord Jesus is qualified to do what He promises to do, to those who come unto Him. This is His method. This is how He will have people live - Coming to Him. The gracious life of the people of God is a life of Coming. A life of leaving and losing self. A life of being needy, poor, destitute. A life mixed with a good deal of fear, and much bondage. A life when evidences are dark. A life that they often cannot understand. You will be mysteries to yourselves as you are taught of God. You will find mysteries in your feelings - one hour fervently praying and the next hour just turned into a worldling, a poor carnal creature, and you cannot understand the mystery of these changes. The only solution to all the difficulties that God's people find is given to them when they come to Him, and the only rest to their weary souls is in Him. "I will give you rest."

Let us look as enabled for a short time first at the "coming." It is the action of faith, it is the motion of a believing heart, carrying burdens and labouring hard in many things; it is the casting of a look of faith on that glorious Person in His own glass - "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord;" the perfection of God in the Man Christ Jesus; all the perfections of Eternal Deity, and

the love of the Father, and the grace of the Son, and the mighty moving, and teaching of the Spirit, all seen in that glass, and when seen there is a movement. A tear moves the soul, or expresses its movement, and the sigh, the groan - O that I were right; O that I may be delivered from this present trouble; O that I might have rest to my weary soul; that I might find the bosom of the Saviour on which to recline; - all that is "coming". It may not appear, may not feel in the person who comes, always to be coming, but that is what it is. It is the moving of the heart in faith, in sweet response to the moving of the Spirit on the heart. The wind bloweth where it listeth and the wind of the Spirit sometimes blowing from the north nipping wrong growth, killing weeds and so on, that wind from the Spirit carries the soul God-ward, Christ-ward, and the blowing of the south wind has the same effect, working differently, comfortably, hopefully, sweetly, humbly carrying the soul in its own influence to the Lord Jesus. The garden is affected by the wind. The north wind affects the garden, the south wind affects the garden and the blowing of the Spirit affects a poor sinner and teaches him how to come; helps him to come; shows him what coming is, that it is pouring the heart out before God; it is bringing matters which are perplexing to God, it is causing the soul to cease labouring, - a hard thing that. You will find in your pilgrimage one of the hardest things will be to cease working. The very thing that you think is right, you will find to be wrong. You may try in your labour even to produce gracious feelings and you find you cannot, you labour to humble yourself as you are told to do and find you cannot. You labour to believe and find you cannot believe. You can enter into the hymn - "O could I but believe, then all would easy be". You labour to resign yourself into the hands of God and find you fret and murmur and have no rest. You may labour to resist a besetment, some peculiar sin, peculiar to yourself, and you cannot do it. Do what you will, there it is, a besetment, something peculiar to the constitution of your mind. You will labour against evil, against rebellion and the Lord says, you cannot do it, He intends you shall not do it, because if you did you would have something to boast of. If Abraham were justified by works he would have wherewith to glory but not before God, and if you could manage the things you try to manage, if I could manage the things I try to manage, you would fail and I should fail, we should always be failing, and it is hard to believe the remedy is in doing nothing. It is hard to believe that the more, the sooner you leave off working, the better for your soul. Salvation is secured, but the way to experience it is very difficult. "Come unto Me." Leave your working arm, leave all your strength, leave everything. O but is it not difficult. There is something in your circumstances that says you must do this, you must do that and that 'must' has to go; that doing has to go and you will find this, that when you are enabled to obey the Lord Jesus in this invitation you are well. Coming then, is ceasing to work. Coming is being blown upon by the Spirit of grace and supplication. Coming is the motion of a living faith, a needy sinner. Some of us mercifully know what that means. Come to Me. Here is the Object of faith. The one Object is this Object before us. You cannot find Him out. If you go forward

you cannot see Him. If you go backward you cannot find Him. If you go to the right-hand He hides Himself. If you go to the left you cannot perceive Him. How then shall I come?

Revelation of Him in two particular ways. First in the Word of God. There is where you will see Him sometimes. A sweet word in a Psalm will show you the Saviour. You may read this - "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass." O what a sight that may give you of Him. That is what I need. I need the rain of grace; I need the showers of mercy, then your heart will run to Him and pray that what is there prophesied of Him, He would make good in your experience. Then you come to Him. You may see Him in this word:- "The Lord God hath opened Mine ear and I was not rebellious. I gave My back to the smiters and My cheek to them that plucked off the hair." You may get such a sight of a suffering Saviour and such a hope that He suffered for you, that you will be at His footstool and you will find yourself casting the anchor of hope there, in Him. You may see Him in that word "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His Servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him stay upon his God." Let him lean on My promise, on My arm, and that will be coming to Him. You may see Him in His compassion, His High Priesthood, able to succour them that are tempted, and then you will come to Him, and these things are in the Word of God. And the second way is by some gracious manifestation of Him by the Holy Ghost. "He shall glorify Me", and that may come when you are not reading the Word. That may come when you are in prayer; it may come when you are hearing. This is a sovereign matter, sovereignly in times appointed by the Father. The Holy Ghost is sent by the Son to such and such a sinner; such and such a house; such and such a family and there this poor creature has suddenly his eyes opened and there is the Saviour before Him. He sees Him hanging on a tree as Newton did. "I saw One hanging on a tree in agonies and blood." O and the Spirit may give you, with some distinctness to see Christ the throne of grace, the Altar to which He gives poor people, hungry for Himself, right to eat. That brings the sinner to Him. You may see Him able to succour, able to bear burdens. You may see Him in that scripture - "Cast thy burden on the Lord," and all these manifestations of the Son of God will have the sweet, the powerful effect of enabling you to obey this word - "Come unto Me." Leave yourself. The hardest task we shall ever have. Leave yourself. Leave your wisdom, leave your working arm, leave all your labour and come to Me with your burdens, heavy-laden. A burden of guilt. A burden of sin. A burden of indwelling workings of sin; a burden of some affliction, either in your person or in some near to you, Come to Me with them. It is wonderfully sweet to be enabled thus to obey the word of the Saviour, "Come unto Me." O the majesty of the invitation, the mercy of it, the compassion of it, the greatness of it and the power of it reaching the sinner, sweetly darting from heaven, from the lips of the Saviour and finding its appointed lodging place in a distressed soul. He knows where to send it. "He sent His word and healed them." We might easily miss the object, Christ cannot.

Look at the promise for a few minutes - "and I will give you rest." He is able. He rests Himself and this is worth an observation. He is resting. God rested on the seventh day and hallowed it. Rested from all His works of creation. Christ laboured to make an end of sin and He accomplished it and when He rose from the dead He entered into heaven and there He rested. The Trinity rests in its love. I will rest in My love. He rests in His purpose. He rests in His glorious power. Sweet is Christ's. Christ rests and that is the rest which He gives to His people. They rest from their guilt when it is washed away. They rest in their labour against sin, committing the matter to Him that He should overcome; that He should be the One to give victory to your hearts labour, that you shall not say "I did it." Never shall a saint say of one single sin in his heart, that he in his own power and wisdom broke and overcame that sin. A strong thing to say, some may think, but not too strong - it is true. You must receive if ever you are to be a conquerer, power from Christ, and when you come to Him, He gives you rest in this particular, that is to say you leave the battle with Him. He will give strength to your faith, but that will be His way of fighting, He will give strength and energy to your love, that is His way of fighting. He will give strength and energy to your hope and you will say - "Hope thou in God." Leave all natural things; leave yourself to come to Me and I will give you rest. Gospel rest is rest. The rest that the soul has in the atonement. Rest in the love of God. Rest in His word. Jacob in his great fear, when he heard Esau was coming, had one thing to rest on; that was the word of God, "I will be with thee." When you can go and plead a word of God that has been put into a furnace of affliction and say "Thou saidst," - Thou didst't say, you obey Him in that. Put Me in remembrance. Bring to Me what I promised you. God will never forget it, but He will have His people remind Him of it, according to that word "Put Me in remembrance" and faith puts God in remembrance of the covenant. Remember the covenant. Remember Thy Holy promise.

Well, is it not wonderful that Jesus Christ should speak like this to His poor people. "Come unto Me." O it is a mercy to be enabled to obey Him, and say - Glad I come, here I am a poor wretch, Lord receive me. They reproached Him in His day on the earth because He would go and eat with sinners and consort with them. They murmured and said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." That, in the gospel is His glory. Well, have not some of you been favoured to sit at table with Him. You have rested in His word, in His love, in His power, in His goodness, in His promise, in His faithfulness. I will give it you. Ah, He is no short Giver. Oh the fulness, the ampleness, of that blessed supply. Wisdom, grace, mercy, love, faithfulness and power combined in Christ to make Him an able, willing Saviour. Therefore, oppressed people, troubled people, labouring fruitlessly till you get unhappy, look at this invitation, God make you look at it, I cannot. "Come unto Me." The Scripture is full of characters. The Scriptures are given to characters. A Father speaks to His children, the Saviour speaks to the lost, the Spirit is sent to them. This Holy Book, trampled under foot by men who hold and talk

about it, the Word of God or the Scripture, but it is a living word, a living gospel, a living Christ who lovingly, mercifully speaks thus - "Come unto Me." I know your labour and it is a lost labour, you will never gain by it, I know your burdens and see readiness to sink under them. You will never stand under them, come with them to Me, and I will cause you to see the sweetness of leaving off working and I will cause you to understand the blessedness of having your burdens taken from you. You will keep them, yet they will be taken from you. You say, I have got the trouble but I have lost it. I know what that means, so do some of you. You have got your affliction. You are not delivered altogether from that, but you can say I have lost the burden of it. The Lord has taken it. I am not now dead to it but the Lord has taken it away from me. You say there is no curse in it, there is no anger in it, no wrath, no sword. That is a wonderful way of losing your burden. Then you take your cross up and you follow your Saviour. May the Lord help us to look at this beautiful word. It is a text may have been spoken, is often spoken by ministers, and I have had more than once, but I have never got to the end of it and never shall, and the mystery of it and the mercy of it I know very little about, but it is a blessed word, and may the Lord speak it to us. Amen.
