

## *To God Alone Be The Glory*

In the days before cell phones, the students of a certain college would play a joke on the incoming class. One senior, one junior, and one sophomore would befriend a freshman. When trust had been gained, the upperclassmen would suggest that the freshman come to a party with them at a certain hotel in a town about nine miles away. Once there, the freshman was told to cross the street and buy beer at the liquor store. But the older students knew that store always carded. When the freshman came out of the liquor store empty-handed, the upperclassmen would yell out the car window, “The joke’s on you,” and drive back to school without the gullible frosh. Nine miles is a long walk back to campus.

After a few years of this, the hotel manager decided to tell the upperclassmen that they each had to give him \$10 if they wanted to pull their prank at his hotel. And since there was only one hotel and one liquor store in town, and since a police car rolled into the hotel parking lot at just that moment, the upperclassmen quickly decided to pay. It was still relatively inexpensive fun. But this time, when the upperclassmen drove off, the hotel manager went out and asked if the freshman would like to help him play a joke on the upperclassmen. As soon as the frosh promised never to reveal the joke to them, the hotel manager explained what he had done. He bought the freshman a nice dinner and drove the student the nine miles back to the outskirts of the college town. The next day the freshman could smile at

the would-be tormentors as if they had really pulled the wool over the eyes, and say to them quietly inside the brain, “No, the joke’s on you.”

From that strange story, we jump over to some words of Jesus which sound strange to our ears. <sup>25</sup>*At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. <sup>26</sup>Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.”*

“*At that time.*” At what time? What had just happened? John the Baptizer sent his disciples to ask Jesus whether he was indeed the Messiah. Jesus sent John his answer: “Yes, I am. Look at the miracles that are being done. And notice especially that the good news of forgiveness is being proclaimed to the poor. I am the long-promised Messiah.”

Then we hear how Jesus denounced certain towns like Korazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum for failing to repent at his preaching. After all, most of his miracles had been performed in these towns. Jesus said that if these miracles had been performed in places like Tyre and Sidon and Sodom, they would have repented. That’s when Jesus said, <sup>25</sup>*“I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”*

Ok, what are the ‘these things’ that have been hidden or revealed? Jesus is

referring to the fact that his miracles carried a message, and that the message had been understood by the simple, the poor, the humble. They ‘got it’ that such miracles could be performed only by the Messiah. But there was more: only the Messiah would proclaim such good news of forgiveness to the poor. This message was hidden from the wise and learned.

But wait a minute. Doesn’t the Bible say that God wants everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth? Yes it does (1 Timothy 2:4. See also 2 Peter 3:9 and Ezekiel 33:11). So how can Jesus praise his Father for hiding the truth from the wise and learned? (See also Luke 10:21.) What’s going on?

The key to unlocking this strange verse is to realize who the “wise and learned” are. Jesus isn’t referring to people who are well-educated, but to those who convince themselves they are so wise and learned that they don’t need the Bible, certainly not the parts that tell them they are sinners. It’s not as though the heavenly Father wants these smarty-pants people to suffer an eternity away from his happiness. They themselves have said things that sound like, “I just can’t believe in such a simple plan. There’s got to be more to it. Too many things don’t make sense to my superior mind.”

How can we know that *the wise and learned* are the people who think they are so wise and learned? Because of whom Jesus compares them with—*little*

*children*. The Greek word here describes someone too young to speak. Children this young don’t know much, and what they know they can’t tell you. Yet when dad offers to pick them up, they extend their arms because they know his love. When mom offers them a piece of food, they put out their hand. She’s done this before. When uncle tosses them up in the air a few inches, they laugh, believing uncle will actually catch them on the way down. What a great picture of everyone who trusts whatever they are told about God from such a reliable source as the Son of God, or from his book, the Bible. It was the Father’s good pleasure to reveal such things to these ‘little children,’ no matter how old they are, or well educated. They don’t have to pass an IQ test to be fit for God’s kingdom. Think about that. You “little children” understand things that the wisest minds on earth have trouble grasping—things like: God made you, he preserves your life, he loves you, he wants you to spend eternity in his joy, he got rid of all the bad things you will ever do, he wants you to turn away from evil and do good, not to gain his favor, but to say thanks for his favor.

These things God is pleased to hide from those who think themselves too wise and learned to need them. But these things are revealed to you who believe whatever you’re told, like gullible freshmen befriended by upperclassmen, except that Jesus never tricks us. So, dear friends, don’t be discouraged when so few seem

to be faithful to Jesus or eager to do what is good for others. Rather join Jesus in praising the Father that anyone at all believes—that **you** believe what was revealed!

How are these things revealed? Jesus answers: *27All things have been committed to me by my Father.* Jesus knows everything there is to know about God. He also knows who he himself really is—he’s the only one who does. Jesus says, *27No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.* And he chooses to reveal the Father to people who are like little children, people who believe whatever he tells them.

Notice something else here. There is the Father, and there is the Son. If you think you have one, but you don’t have the other, you don’t have the one either. It’s not enough to say, “I believe in God.” Say something more specific: “I believe in the Triune God.” “I believe in Jesus, the Son of God, my Savior from sin.” If you get stuck on what to say, think of all that the Apostles’ Creed catalogs about God.

If you’re still bothered by Jesus’ rejoicing that the Father has hidden these things from the wise and learned, listen to what Jesus says next. He’s about to prove that he really wants everyone to be like little children. *28“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I*

*will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Most of us have never used a yoke, but you may have heard them. A yoke is a piece of wood, usually about four to six feet long. If you tie a four-foot rope to each end, and tie the ropes to buckets filled with water or rocks or sand, you can then set the yoke on your neck and lift the whole load with your legs and back just by standing up. But because the weight of the buckets is on your neck, the buckets are not trying to pull your arms out of their sockets. So a yoke makes it easier to carry a load. If you’ve ever carried heavy loads, you can appreciate Jesus’ words, “*Come to me all you who are weary and burdened.*”

“Weary and burdened.” You’ve been there. You’ve done wrong and felt the weight. Maybe you’ve been letting yourself get away with wrongdoing during all this COVID mess, like consuming more as a way of dealing with your feelings (rather than taking them to the Lord), or saying unloving or unhelpful things (instead of filling your soul with daily Bible reading so the fruits of the Spirit come out of you). All wrongdoing becomes a burden on our souls. Then there’s guilt, one of the heaviest possible burdens to bear. Imagine filling up two buckets with guilt, tying them to a yoke, and carrying the

yoke around with you all day. Weary and burdened, indeed!

Think about where guilt comes from: it comes from not fulfilling the expectations of someone whose respect you want or need. Even if a person doesn't want God's love or respect, deep down they sense that they need it. If they shush their need, that's when they become what Jesus calls "wise and learned." That's when someone needs to yell compassionately out the window of a car like college students, "THE YOKE'S ON YOU. That heavy yoke of sin or guilt is still on you."

Jesus doesn't want you to carry this burden. That's why, like a nice hotel manager, he says: *28Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* 'Rest' is the opposite of 'burdened.' So then rest is the opposite of feeling guilty. What's the best way to overcome guilt? To hear the person you wronged declare that they forgive you. Forgiveness is rest. Jesus says, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened by not living up to my expectations, and I will give you forgiveness.* Your yoke of guilt is too heavy to bear. *29Take my yoke upon you... 30For my yoke of forgiveness is easy to pick up, and my burden of forgiveness is light enough for you to carry around all day. You will not get tired out by carrying my yoke.*"

"That sounds really good, Jesus. How can I exchange my yoke of guilt for your yoke

of forgiveness?" Jesus answers: "*Come to me, and I'll just trade you. Then learn from me. I'll teach you all the things that have been committed to me by my Father.* There's so much wonderful stuff for you to learn about the Father from my Word. Keep coming to me. And learn from me *For I am gentle.* You can come back to me every day, ready to repent, with another yoke-full of guilt, and I will never get ugly with you. I'll never harsh out on you. I'll never ask: 'Well, how many days in a row are you going to come back to me to say you're sorry for the same sin that I just forgave you for yesterday? When are you going to shape up?' No, I won't say that. *I am gentle.*

"And I am *humble in heart.*" "Why is that important, Jesus?" "I'll never be too proud to acknowledge you as one of mine, no matter what you've done, no matter how long you have been away, no matter how long you have resisted my love. *I am humble in heart.* I set aside the full use of my glory to carry your guilt to the cross. I'm never going to change my mind and disown you. You're the only one who can change my plans for you, and the only way you can do that is by refusing to repent of your sins, or refusing to spend time in my Word. But whenever my Holy Spirit leads you to repent, *you will find rest for your soul.* You'll have my light yoke of forgiveness to carry around, and I will have so much fun reminding you, MY YOKE'S ON YOU!"