“An Easy Existence”

September 30, 2018

Matthew 11:20-30

Please find with me the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.

We’ve all got this same problem. We want everything to be easier. In 1829 an architect by the name of Isaiah Rogers designed a modern hotel, known as the Tremont Hotel in Boston, MA. And what did the Tremont have that no other hotel in the United States had, indoor plumbing; something that made life easier. That was 1829.

And on March 10th, 1876, Alexander Graham Bell invented a device in which he spoke to his assistant, Thomas Watson, over electric wires. He said “Mr. Watson, come over here. I want to see you.” The telephone made life easier.

Then, in 1879, another brilliant mind, Thomas Alva Edison, invented the electric light bulb; which again, made our lives easier. By the way, just four years later, Edison invented an indoor electric heater so things would be easier for us.

And technology has made life so easy that today we can speak and text and even take and send pictures millions of miles away in just seconds; all because we want life easier.

Does anyone here know why we spend three billion dollars every year on diets and diet pills? Because we want life to be easier than it is. And now, you can be happy and rich in four weeks for just $19.99 plus tax. And a four ounce bottle of Blue Emu maximum pain relief cream can be purchased on Amazon for $12.48. And what is the symbol Staples uses on all of its advertising? The “Easy” button.

And what’s the definition for easier? “Easier” means *“achieved without much effort.”*

I’ve titled today’s sermon “An Easy Existence.” Shall we pray?

Here’s why I began today with the fact that we all want life to be easier. Look with me at Matthew 11:28 *“Come unto me, all ye that labour [all who are toiling] and are heavy laden [burdened], 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 [suitable, kindly, and useful], and my burden is light [easily managed].”*

Aren’t you glad for Strong’s Concordance, which gives you a clearer meaning for these Old English words? And it appears as if Jesus is telling us that were we to take *His* yoke and learn from Him that He would give rest to our souls. Why? Here’s His answer. Because *His* yoke is suitable, kindly, and useful and His burden is easily managed.

Of all the many pictures Jesus used to teach us how important it is to lean on *His* strength, this is one of His best. The picture comes from the farmer who hooks a younger ox together with an older ox into the same yoke. And why would a farmer do that? So that, as the younger ox learns to do his work, he only *thinks* he’s doing the plowing. All the while he works alongside the older ox, that older ox is doing all and for sure, most of the work. So, his yoke is easy, which means “suitable, kindly, and useful” and his burden is light. Your life, your Christian life, is a whole lot easier when you see Whose really carrying all the weight and doing the work.

Today’s lesson on an easy existence comes to us from, not only Jesus, but the Apostle Paul. Please turn with me to Romans chapter eight and verse fourteen, where Paul teaches you about yourself; in that you are, as a Believer in Christ, inside the family of God; verse fourteen.

Now, as I read, here’s what you can look for. Look for the number of times Paul refers to the children of God.

Romans 8:14 *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are* ***the sons of God****. (15) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of* ***adoption [Sonship****], whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16) The Spirit itself [Himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are* ***the children of God****:*

*(17) And if* ***children****, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (18) For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

*(19) For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of* ***the sons of God****. (20) For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, (21) Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of* ***the children of God****.”*

It sounds like everything in the creation is moving towards this one magnificent goal; “the Glorious liberty of the children of God.” And, did you notice that both we human beings as well as the entire physical creation are moving in that exact same direction?

Look a second time at verse nineteen. Romans 8:19 *“For the earnest expectation of* ***the creature [creation]*** *waiteth for the manifestation [revelation] of the sons of God. (20) For* ***the creature [creation]*** *was made subject to vanity [futility], not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, (21) Because* ***the creature [creation]*** *itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”*

Everything in the universe, everything in God’s creation, every moment of the day, is advancing towards this one goal; the Glorious Liberty of the Children of God. And you who are in the family of God are a vital link in this spiritual chain which began at the Cross of Christ and ends in “glorious liberty of God’s children.”

But, would you look with me what this all looks like in the present? See with me what the Holy Spirit is teaching us through Paul’s words.

Suffering. Suffering isn’t easy, is it? Suffering is almost always what we would not choose for our lives. But suffering stands in a very high place in God’s economy. It’s one of the most important things for a Christian to see and understand; verse 17.

Romans 8:17 *“And if [since] children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we* ***suffer*** *with him, that we may be also glorified together. (18) For I reckon that the* ***sufferings*** *of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

How much of your life is made up of pushing away suffering? You do want life easier, don’t you? Fenelon puts it this way. *“Do not push away the progress God wants to make in your life.”* Suffering, as you all know by experience, is here. And it’s in your life and my life.

Folks, this is how Paul sees life. This is how God sees life. We are the sons of God by faith in Christ. And since we are sons, God has sent His Spirit to live in us, in part, to bear witness with our spirits that we are His. You see, as His sons and daughters, we cry out to Him as a little child to a Heavenly Dad. We say “Abba, Dad, Papa, Father.”

This might be one of the most wonderful aspects of being a Christian. We have God as our personal, Perfect Father. He Perfectly Fatherly. He fully understands and He fully knows you. He is your Provider. He doesn’t overlook a single thing in your life. He’s constantly got His eye on *you*. Do you really think anything in your life can escape His notice? Do you think He doesn’t know about or understand your suffering?

Folks, this is huge. To know God as He really is is to have found the greatest treasure ever uncovered. Think about it like this. At the very core of the universe is a Perfect Father. Everything in God’s universe is related in some way to His Fatherly oversight.

Think about how God revealed Himself to you. Your first contact with God in salvation is this. By faith in Christ you became a child of God. John 1:10 *“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. (11) He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

*(12) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: (13)* ***Which were born****, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but* ***of God****.”*

You see, there is no salvation except by entering into an eternal relationship with an Eternal Father. You became a child of God at the moment you exercised faith in Jesus. You were born of God.

And, as a child of God, you are an heir. And as an heir, you are a joint-heir along with Jesus. And, says the Holy Spirit in Paul, *“if so be that we* ***suffer*** *with him, that we may be also glorified together. (18) For I reckon that the* ***sufferings*** *of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

Would you look with me at this little phrase “If so be”? The phrase is found just four times in your Bible. Look back with me at Romans 8:9 *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit,* ***if so be*** *that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*

And here’s another at I Peter 2:2 *“As newborn babes, desire [crave] the sincere [pure] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (3)* ***If so be*** *ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”*

“If so be” means in our modern world “since that’s the case,” therefore, something else is true.

So, what is Paul going for? Romans 8:17 *“And if [since] children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be [****since that’s the case****] that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”*

Now, didn’t I say earlier that we’re all after an easier existence? I did. Then, what is Paul saying? He’s saying this. “Since we’re children of God, we’re His heirs. And since we’re joint-heirs with Christ, we suffer. But, Christian, every ounce of your suffering is this “we suffer with Him.”

Remember the yoke? How many of you think the yoke would sometimes chafe on the neck of the oxen? Well, what if all the chafing on the neck of that ox was felt and handled by the older, more mature, and much more capable ox?

You see, that’s exactly what Jesus says. Matthew 8:29 *“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 [suitable, kindly, and useful], and my burden is light [easily managed].”*

Doesn’t a yoke imply hard work and pain and even suffering? Sure. But Whose yoke are you taking upon yourself? Who are you yoking yourself with? I know there are lots of people who yoke themselves with things and people that bring a whole raft of trouble to them. Jesus says that when you take His yoke upon you He give you rest.

Whenever the Christian suffers and tries to deal with the suffering without the LORD Jesus, you completely miss the power and the blessedness of being united to Christ. Folks, Christians suffer *with* Christ; never, never alone; and never, never apart from Christ. Those of you who are suffering apart from Him are trying to do something that is, practically speaking, impossible. We need Christ constantly. But we need Him especially when we go through pain and suffering.

Maybe you’ve had a quote “tough life,” maybe you’ve had to deal with and face some very difficult days; maybe your suffering is like this, as one man told me, “I didn’t sign up for this when I became a Christian.” Maybe you’re suffering today. But, if you’re on your own, more power to you. It just doesn’t work. What works is that you see yourself as you really are; God’s own son or daughter. You are a joint-heir with Christ in the glory to come; if so be; since that’s the case, then, just as you experience suffering with Him in the present, so you will experience glory with Him in the age to come. And how large is that? Romans 8:18 *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time* ***are not worthy to be compared*** *with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

Your sufferings are hard. I agree. Your sufferings might sometimes not appear to be worth it. Sometimes they are unbearable. Your sufferings are usually things you simply don’t want. But, if you take every one of those painful things and see yourself as perfectly joined to Jesus Christ in them, then you can find, not only the strength to deal with them, but find that the sweetest fellowship of the Christian is found when he or she is closest to the LORD during those hard times. He promises rest to people who take on His Yoke. You see, *He’s* your Strength and your Song not only when things are going well; but when they are not going according to plan; your plan or my plan.

No one likes to suffer. But when you do, to suffer on your own is to suffer twice as much and you need to.

Let’s look at it this way. Suppose yesterday was New Year’s Day. And yesterday, you had a really bad day. You got a call from the IRS that they were going to audit you. And, while you were out to breakfast, your house caught fire and completely burned to the ground. The tests came back from your doctor and revealed that you have cancer for which there is no treatment and you have less than six months to live. If someone were to ask you today, January 2 how your year was going so far, we’d all say the exact same thing. “It couldn’t be any worse.”

But then as the year went on, the IRS completed their audit and found that you had overpaid your taxes and they will be sending you a $30,000 refund. Your son and his wife called to tell you that they were pregnant and your first grandchild was born before the end of the year. Your doctor called to tell you that a drug company had just developed a medication that appears to be 100% successful in treating the kind of cancer that you had and that the insurance company was going to cover it 100%. And your insurance agent called to let you know that since they had sold you the top-of the -line plan, the insurance company would pay for you to build a brand new house from the ground up exactly as you want, pay to replace all your belongings at their full replacement cost and, in the meanwhile, pay for you to live in a nice place with all costs, covered. Now, if someone were to ask you how your year went at the end of that year, you would have a completely different answer, wouldn’t you? [Adapted from [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com) “How Can A Good God Allow Suffering?” by Pastor Pat Damiani, April 16, 2018].

Folks, today is January 2nd. But the year’s not over. It’s just beginning. You’ve suffered and you’re suffering. For some of you, it’s suffering is more than you can bear. Why? You’re on your own. But that’s certainly not God’s plan. It is never God’s will for you to suffer apart from Him.

Here’s the LORD’s plan. His plan is for you to see at least these two things.

One, you are joined to Jesus Christ. So, with or without suffering, you are His. You are joined to Him.

And two, if it’s the case that you do suffer, remember that December 31st is coming. The same glory that He will partake in, you will also partake in. And that glory is not worthy to be compared to today’s suffering. Romans 8:18 *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are* ***not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us****.”*

And one final thing to consider. Romans 8:18 *“For* ***I reckon*** *that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

Do you remember Romans 6:11 *“Likewise* ***reckon*** *ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

And do you know what “reckon” means? I reckon = I count true what is already true. Just like you are commanded by the LORD to count yourself dead indeed to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ, your LORD; so, you are also able at this very moment to reckon, to count true something that is already true about suffering; that the present suffer-ings are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is coming.

The following is a true story. Quite a few years ago there lived a man named William Cowper. And William was a Christian. But he had some very serious concerns in his life. He was very shy and had lots of anxiety. And he battled with depression; deep depression; for years. At one point in his life in 1763, William spent eighteen months in a mental institution.

One day William decided to end it all. So, he arranged for someone to pick him up in a carriage and drive him (by horse carriage) to the Thames River where he planned on jumping off a bridge into the river and drown himself. When his carriage driver realized what he was doing, he caught him and dragged him back into the carriage and took him back home.

William, at home that night, then took a knife and stabbed himself. But as he fell, the knife blade broke and he couldn’t complete the job. So, he found a rope, hung it high on a rafter and put it around his neck as the morning light rose. But, a neighbor entered his room just as he was began to hang himself and cut him down. He became ever more despondent, thinking that he was so bad he couldn’t even successfully commit suicide.

Later that week a Pastor from the Church stopped in to see him. That Pastor’s name was John Newton. And William Cowper became friends with Pastor Newton. And William was a poet; actually a hymn-writer. He and Newton then wrote a hymnal together called the Olney Hymns. And, wouldn’t you know it; inside that hymnal was a hymn Newton wrote called “Amazing Grace.” But another hymn in that hymnal written by William Cowper was this one “God Moves In A Mysterious Way.”

Here’s Cowper’s hymn.

1. God moves in a mysterious way  
   His wonders to perform;  
   He plants His footsteps in the sea  
   And rides upon the storm.

    2. Deep in unfathomable mines  
    Of never failing skill  
    He treasures up His bright designs  
    And works His sov’reign will.

    3. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
    The clouds ye so much dread  
    Are big with mercy and shall break  
    In blessings on your head.

   4. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
    But trust Him for His grace;  
    Behind a frowning providence  
    He hides a smiling face.

    5. His purposes will ripen fast,  
    Unfolding every hour;  
    The bud may have a bitter taste,  
  But sweet will be the flow’r.

6. Blind unbelief is sure to err  
    And scan His work in vain;  
    God is His own interpreter,  
    And He will make it plain.

I don’t know if any of us will really understand suffering this side of Heaven. But, I do know this. “God will make it plain.’ So, for now, I choose to take His yoke and learn from Him.

Now, where does that put you? Are you laboring and heavily burdened because of your suffering? Will you go to Him today and take His yoke on you and learn from Him Who He is meek and lowly of heart?

His yoke is easy. It’ssuitable, kindly, and useful. And He promises rest to your soul. So, what will it be? And how will you apply Romans 8 to your life and ministry?

First, count true only what is true.

Second, surrender yourself entirely to the LORD.

Third, surrender all of your suffering to Him.

Fourth, surrender yourself the time of God’s deliverance out of your suffering.

And fifth, surrender yourself to the means of God’s deliverance out of your suffering.

God’s goal is to make you more and more pleasing to Him. And, yes, He often chooses suffering to do so. If you knew, when you looked back on your life, that your life had become much more pleasing to Him and much more fruitful to other by your experience of suffering, would you wish you had accepted that suffering more patiently and waited on Him?

So, will it be your way or His way? Suffering in union with Him or suffering alone and apart from Him? It’s your choice. He’s patiently waiting until you are ready to let Him have His way. I can only imagine the LORD with His ear to your heart, waiting for your response today. What will it be? Will you surrender you entire life to Him today? If not, why not?

Graham Kendrick

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5-DQmhKPY4

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 354 “I Cannot Tell”