

## **THE CALL OF CHRIST: MATTHEW 11:16-19, 25-30**

*By James L. Killen, Jr.*

**The people of Galilee were deciding how they would respond to the ministry of Jesus. In the midst of their ambivalence, Jesus spoke out to say clearly what he was about and what kind of response he was calling for: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (v. 28). In those few words, he gave an address, an invitation, and a promise.**

**Jesus addressed himself to those who care deeply and who are trying hard to make life good for themselves and for others. In his own day, Jesus addressed those who were struggling to make life good by following the demanding way of the Pharisees. In our own day, those who are trying hard may be those who take seriously the requirements of the Christian faith and try hard to live up to them. They may also be those who work hard at making life good in other ways—young people who try to live a morally wholesome life in a world that seems to have stopped caring about that, young parents who struggle to provide for their children and to raise them up in a wholesome**

**way, people who strive to excel in their careers, people who work at building a better world. The grace of God is not for those who don't care or who are looking for an easy way. It is for those who care deeply and try hard.**

**Come to whom? To Jesus, a man who lived a long time ago? But more significantly, we are invited to come to the eternal God who made himself known through Jesus and is still alive and at work in our lives and in our world today.**

**Whether or not we realize it, all of those who care deeply and want to make life good are trying to put themselves into a right relationship with the greater reality that is God.**

**The invitation calls us to turn to Jesus rather than to the other ways in which we might try to make life good.**

**But more important, the invitation tells us that the One for whom we are yearning is ready to welcome us—because God loves us.**

**A young couple who had no money for luxuries or for recreation went for a walk in a village one evening for a date. They stopped for a while to watch a machine in the window of a baker's shop making doughnuts. They didn't realize how hungry**

**they must have looked until the proprietor came out and gave them a bag of doughnuts.**

**The promise goes with the invitation: "I will give you rest." What can that mean? We do not see that the Christian faith gives us rest from the work of trying to make life good. No, but it does give us rest from guilt, self-recrimination, anxiety, and struggling.**

**A tourist in China commented to her guide on the grace with which a Chinese woman carried her baskets of produce hanging from two ends of a pole balanced across her shoulders. The guide said, "Yes, but it is very heavy."**

**The yoke that Jesus offers will enable us to bear the really significant burdens of life with grace and dignity.**

**Let us pray...**

**We rejoice, O Christ,**

**for in your tender compassion**

**you shoulder our burdens and ease our heavy hearts.**

**Give us the strength to carry each other**

**as you have carried us. Amen.**