

Key idea: Jesus expresses his thanks to God the Father for the assurance that comes through his working revelation, his identity as God himself and the invitation to come and deal with God through Jesus so that rest is received.

FCF:

Application: Assurance, identity/certainty, invitation

1. 'At that time'...

Jesus has just confronted the crowd around him with his identity. As John the Baptist asks, 'Who are you?', Jesus makes clear that he is the endpoint of God's plan to deal with human sin and to bring God's approval to this broken and rebellious world. Those listening are confronted with the stark reality that to reject Jesus and his amazing works is to invite eternal condemnation.

Those statements of 'woe', in verses 20-24, should cause us to pause and consider what is going on.

On one level, there would have been an immense consternation on the part of many listening – after all, eternal condemnation for rejecting the deeds of a freakshow? There would have been outrage amongst the Jewish community as their relationship with God was questioned, their status as God's chosen people was brought under scrutiny.

Conversely, those listening to Jesus who had become his disciples might have been similarly disturbed, albeit for a different reason. After all, if even Jesus and his amazing and life-changing miracles

could not bring these three towns to genuine repentance – a change of mind – then what hope did they have? And this against the backdrop of John the Baptist being puzzled, and the Twelve heading off to a mission that Jesus knows will be profoundly painful and heart-rending and difficult!

And, flowing out of this question is the obvious observation: not even Jesus was always successful in his evangelistic efforts (if we can call them that!). Even Jesus was resisted, rejected, even reviled.

I want to suggest that all this is taking place because ‘at this time’ – see there in verse 25 – there is a remarkable prayer from Jesus, and an invitation. The structure of this section is quite clear – in verses 25-27, Jesus prays a prayer – it is a vertical interaction observed by the crowd. In verses 28-30, Jesus offers an invitation and two commands – it is a horizontal interaction, which emerges out of what I think is the wonderful assurance revealed in verses 25-27.

‘At this time’, Jesus gives the crowd a glimpse into the relationship he has with his Father, their distinctive roles and identities, and the invitation that flows from that. I think that this prayer and revelation and invitation emerge because Jesus is ‘answering’ – and the word is there in the Greek text – a series of questions and consternations that have emerged from his statements of woe and his rejection in these three towns.

On the one hand, as Jesus prays, we see a great assurance and a great certainty – the assurance is that the Father is the one who

works 'these things', and the certainty is that if you want to know the Father, you deal with the Son.

On the other hand, the Son shows his compassion and all-encompassing concern – he turns to invite all those in front of him to come and know God the Father through him, and so to have rest.

PRAYER...

2. The assurance of the Father (vs.25-26)

'At that time' – it is so important to grasp the context for this prayer from Jesus.

He has just pronounced 'woes' of judgement on the towns of Bethsaida and Chorazin, and his home-base of Capernaum. They are condemned because they have not 'repented' (changed their mind, adjusted to the new reality that is the kingdom of God coming, God doing exactly as he promised, to roll back sin and bring blessing) when faced, in the flesh, by the amazing deeds of Jesus.

But, contained within that judgement woe, is a startling revelation – Jesus is ignored, rejected, and his advances through the amazing works and words that he has brought are repudiated. How does he deal with this?

I mean, you know the feeling. Be it family, friends, acquaintances, work-colleagues, you have done everything physically and emotionally and verbally possible to put Jesus in front of them. And they just reject the good doctor outright. For me, and this is from a man remarkably unsuccessful in evangelism, it is profoundly

disheartening and discouraging. I scratch my head and wonder what I have done, what I could have changed, how I could have been more persuasive.

Without wanting to downplay or dismiss such introspection – and it is good to do at times – how do you deal with the fact that the very person, words and works of Jesus himself were rejected outright, dismissed and ignored? And how does Jesus deal with this?

Look at verses 25-26... READ.

Jesus responds to the obvious questions and consternation by launching into a prayer of thanksgiving and praise – how remarkable!

Why does he do that?

I suspect that he wants us to see things from the ‘top-down’ view. The revelation of the knowledge that reality has changed – this revelation can only be applied by God the Father to people.

It is never a revelation that we grasp with minds that are dead in sin (Eph.2:1-2). It is never a revelation that we by nature want to know – I mean, it is our dethroning and Jesus’ coronation! It is never a revelation that we come to by logical conclusion or deduction, especially when our minds and hearts are darkened by sin. Nor is it a revelation that we deserve to know, or deserve to grasp of our own nature – after all, we are by nature under God’s judgement!

In this sense, Jesus is making clear that the process of coming to know God as Father and Jesus as king is NOT a natural event, but

a supernatural event: a gift of revelation by God to those who only deserve his condemnation and eternal wrath. This 'God-down' view brings us face-to-face with God's normal method of action – he gives humans what they don't deserve at the very moment they should have the eternal judgement they do deserve!

In this sense, the proclamation of 'these things' (Jesus is here, repent!) is the job of humans (as seen in the activity of the most perfect human!) and the job of applying this proclamation is the Father's.

This is in line with God's will and desire – his 'good pleasure'. In this sense, the consequences are at least two.

First, there is an immense safety-net for the people of God here as they go about their job (remember the job of God's people, seen here most typically in Jesus, is to place God in front of all people). The failure of people to respond with repentance – well, we need to get this in the right perspective: the application of the truth about reality can only be applied by God.

Second, this means that coming to know God as the Father – through Jesus, as we will see in a second – is always by God's amazing grace and never by our ability, intelligence, goodness, willpower or heritage. It means that knowing God as Father through Jesus is always by grace: the unmerited gift of God at the very moment he is within his nature to justly judge us!

Moreover, that it is by grace by the Father means that when this revelation is grasped and understood, there is great assurance

here. It is not a matter of division ('Ha – I have understood this and you haven't!') but a matter of assurance – it is applied by God the Father in his good will and pleasure – and that cannot be moved, manipulated or bought!

What a wonderful and insightful prayer by Jesus! What a reassuring, and assuring, insight into the 'top-down' view of the Father working!

3. The certainty of the Son's identity (vs.27)

The prayer closes in a clear statement of where you need to go to actually come to deal with God as he is – **look at verse 27... READ.**

This is a reaffirmation – perhaps we could call it a crystal-clear affirmation – of what Jesus was making clear in verse 10: God-in-the-flesh is standing in front of you!

Any question about Jesus' identity, and his understanding of his identity, is laid to rest at this point: Jesus is uniquely placed because he is in intimate and deeply personal one-ship with God the Father. In light of Matthew 10:20, there couldn't be a clearer reminder that all of God – Father, Spirit, and Son – is working out the revelation that saves. And, if you want to deal with God, you must deal with Jesus.

To deal with Jesus – to listen to him, respond to him, be attentive to him – is to deal with God. God has granted Jesus all the things that he has, and does. In this, Jesus knows God (and is God) in a way that is unique. And Jesus' desire is for people to know God

through him – I think this is part of what he is saying as he makes clear that his desire is to reveal ‘these things’ to people.

There is a wonderful and relieving certainty here: Jesus is the only way to know God, as God truly is.

It is a wonderful certainty because it means that you – any person – knows that in listening to Jesus, in responding rightly to Jesus, we are dealing with God the Father.

It is a relieving certainty because it means that as we do our job as God’s people – representing God – all we need to do is to place Jesus in front of people. The key to knowing God is knowing Jesus. The key to coming to God is through Jesus. The key to dealing with God is dealing with Jesus. So, all we must do as God’s people is to introduce people to Jesus – as he is revealed in the Gospels.

4. The goodness of the Son’s invitation/commands (vs.28-30)

It seems to me that Jesus then goes and shows us – or his listeners then – what this looks like – **look at verses 28-30... READ.**

Jesus extends a very clear invitation – it is all-inclusive, it is all-healing, it is delivered to all in front of him. This is such a clear demonstration not just of what Jesus offers but how to offer what Jesus offers. Jesus doesn’t pause to consider who might respond. Given what he has just expressed about the attitude to his miraculous deeds, Jesus doesn’t second-guess the reaction. Jesus doesn’t divide this listeners before the invitation is issued. Jesus just invites – ‘Come to me and you will find rest!’.

The invitation is made to the ‘weary and burdened’ – to all humans because we all lost rest when we sinned. Rest was lost to humans when we rebelled against God. This is something that has exercised my mind and heart a little this week – what does this mean?

Put simply, I suspect that it is connected to the truth that trying to be God when you are not God, or even capable of being God, is frankly exhausting. It is beyond anything we can achieve, and beyond anything we should try to be. Rest is to dwell in right relationship with God – and for us to seek to be God is to lose that. And it wears us out, burdens us, because this is not what we are made for.

The invitation, then, is to come to God with God in his rightful place – through Jesus. It is to accept the new reality that God’s king is here and to live accordingly. Only then is true rest found.

Moreover, Jesus unpacks what this looks like in the very next phrase – an issuing of two commands – **look again at verse 29... READ.**

To have rest and to come to a place where you know your future (your soul is at rest because your eternal verdict is sorted) is to actually come and be ‘yoked’ to Jesus, to ‘learn’ from him. It is to be his disciple – his whole-hearted student follower. It is to come to the One who rules God’s kingdom, as someone who is no longer a try-hard God.

To be truly at rest is to submit to the lordship of the One who has come to deal with our sin, who has compassion on us because we are broken, who is the final endpoint of God's relentless commitment to dealing with the sin of the world. Moreover, the rule of this lord, this man who is God-in-the-flesh, is one of humility and gentleness and compassion.

It is at this point that we can recognize the reason why Jesus can offer such a broad invitation – because he knows that the Father is the one who will apply this truth. His job is to represent the Father, as the Son who knows him best and truly – and the Father, God, will save his people through that.

At the end of a tough section on the work of a disciple of Jesus, this is a wonderful example of how to represent God well: it is to invite all and sundry to come to the one who will give them rest.

At the end of a tough section on how this message will be received, the essential warmth of the message and the one who represents God is displayed. Jesus offers rest for the weary, rest for the burdened, compassion for the broken. Jesus himself is full of compassion and gentleness.

At the end of a tough section that might cause the disciple of Jesus to quake and quiver, here is reassurance. The message we offer is Jesus, and Jesus as he is. The substance of that message is rest which sin robs us of. The application of that message is by God himself. And the way to display that message is in proclaiming and practice – proclaiming Jesus and practicing sitting at his feet and submitting to his revelation of God in his words and works.