

## Invitation to Rest (huisgroep vragen aan het eind)

November has been great month for me—I think I've found my calling in life. Wonderful, right? Let me explain. In early November I attended my first LIVE football game—a NAC game. It was a very exciting game— in the first half they had scored a goal—euphoria, celebrated with showers of beer sprayed over our heads. But in the second half the other team tied it up. The NAC fans began to accept that it would probably be another draw. But no! At the last minute, NAC scored and won the game—for the first time since August.

A week ago Friday I attended my first ORANJE football game, against World Champion France. It was a hard-fought game. And again the beer was flying. The result? oranje won. Here's my conclusion about my calling in life: if I attend the game, they will win. I will also get drenched in beer, but well, I'm willing to endure a lot to have my team win. Seriously, though... They should give me tickets to every game. I'd sure like to meet Memphis, go to the next EK.

Last Monday there was another Dutchies game, but the team quickly fell behind 2-0. (I wonder, was this because I was watching at home?). Then, close to the end of the game, they finally scored: 2-1. This gave hope, but it would not be enough. They needed to score again. Time was almost gone. During the last few –crazy-- minutes of the game, something unusual happened.

I want to share the first part of a short video for you (tot ongeveer halverweg 2:50)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGWrDOE5jlq>

For the English speakers: The game was won because the coach sent a note onto the field communicating a change in strategy. The note told the captain, Virgil van Dijk, to move up to the forward position. He never stands there because he's a defender. It was all or nothing. But he trusted the coach. Miraculously, he was in position to score the goal that made them the winner of the group.

Think about the moment Virgil received the note in his hand. Circumstances were overwhelming, the team was exhausted. But now this note...

In a way, we're like Virgil. We may be facing difficulty, we may be overwhelmed and weary. But we've received this amazing love note from God, his word, his son Jesus. He sees our potential. He's got the perspective we need. Should we trust the coach also in this situation? Is the coach hopeful? Can we really get back in the game?

Our text today is Matthew 11:25-30. Please listen to this as if you're one of the listeners in the crowd of people.

25 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.

26 Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No 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.

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

This passage shows us some of the things that Jesus came to do

1. he came to reveal the Father to his people..  
in the way the Father longs to be known: as loving Father.  
God is not a perfectionist dictator demanding things of us. That is a false religious focus encouraged by the devil to keep us away from God! Jesus says that God is Lord of all, but also our loving Father. We see that the Father trusts the Son to reveal his heart to us.  
his heart is compassionate and gentle. He came humbly to us as a human being. What kind of king goes to his people? People have to go to them.. But God came to us because we were unable to come

to him. We couldn't come because we were afraid, having the idea that we needed to shape up, follow the rules, before he would approve of us.

2. Jesus came to reveal how to "live the good life" as a human. He is the son of Man. What is the good life? Come and learn to relate with our loving Father.

As I looked at the text I realized that I had always look at it as only a text for people who come to Jesus for the first time—as if 'getting rest for your soul' is a one-time event. What if.... When Jesus says, 'come, weary ones...', he means, simply, all of us, any of us, at any time.

Relating to God offers us rest for our souls. v's 28 and 29 are an invitation to rest. We need rest because we are weary and heavy laden. What do these greek words mean?

Being weary is being utterly exhausted.

Being 'Heavy laden' is different. It refers specifically to the heavy burden of following religious rules when there is no relationship.

Why are we so weary? Generally speaking, work in itself is not exhausting us. What weighs us down is working under the pressure of having to prove our value—to ourselves, to our boss, colleagues. If we don't accept God's love for us, agree with his opinion, then we have this pressure. Sometimes we lose sight of how much God loves us. Other times we still act as if we believe that if we follow the rules better, then he will then be pleased with us. Jesus is aware of this tension in the world. He says, come— there is no blame. God's door is open to us.

(I had a busy week this week. Usually if I'm preaching I know it more in advance, and have cleared the schedule of activities so I can be focussed. But this time I had less time to plan. My week got filled up, and I was stressed. This has been a great message for me. It has been like a note from the coach for me! I felt like Jesus has been gently helping me to look differently at my stress reactions: Am I somehow trying to prove myself? Is that the stress? Rest with me, He invited me.)

In society we face situations where we are judged valuable only when we are performing well. What happens when we mess up? What about the boss who is looking over your shoulder all the time, watching for mistakes? What a burden.. The enemy wants us to think that God functions like our fallen society does. The devil has fooled us into thinking that life is a testing ground to prove ourselves, and that God is like that.

Jesus offers us relationship as a starting place. He says, God finds you valuable right now, just as you are. That gives us Rest. When we feel safe and valuable we can work and grow in God's kingdom together. We are in a growth process with Jesus. He says "learn of me"

Looking at the text, at the Greek words for 'rest'. Jesus offers the hope and joy of being yoked with him.. He says he refreshes those who are tired (v.28), and he provides an intermission to those weighed down with performing (v. 29). What do I mean by intermission? (Imagery is of a soldier in the field who gets a break. God's intermission is not about taking us away, but helping us continue, connected with him.

3. Jesus came to give us a new yoke. What's a yoke?

A yoke is the way one or more animals were harnessed to do work in a field. It is a heavy stiff beam with rings on it, for a rope—not comfortable. Sometimes you have a team of two animals in a yoke. To get a new animal used to the yoke, a farmer might hitch the new animal alongside a more experienced animal. Jesus offers himself as the 'experienced one'. He says his burden is light. Life is still of challenging, and sometimes hard work, but Jesus gives us hope because he promises to be with us.

Jesus offers us HIS yoke. Why is this important? He seems to compare it with another unnamed yoke in this story. People who listened to Jesus as he talked about HIS YOKE would have been listening carefully. Throughout the Bible, yokes were mentioned many times – always as despicable things oppressing God's people. And many times there was this promise of God mentioned– the promise that he would utterly break the yoke from the shoulders of his people. Example is Isaiah 9: 1-6

<sup>2</sup>The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

<sup>3</sup> You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy;  
they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest,  
as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.  
<sup>4</sup> For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar  
across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.  
<sup>5</sup> Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood  
will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.  
<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,

What is oppressing God's people? They are under the government of the kingdom of darkness. The good news is that God has sent Jesus to break every yoke of slavery.. Jesus has broken the power of the kingdom of darkness so we can live freely with him in the kingdom of light.

--- Let's think back to the video of the Dutch soccer team.

The Netherlands is thrilled with the coach Ronald Koeman now because he brought the whole team back to their rightful place—out of shame into the light of hope. We had been weary, now we are refreshed. How did this miracle come about? The coach earned the players' trust and confidence by building a relationship with them. They trust him now-- not only because he once played great soccer but also because they know he has their best interests at heart. This is why they voluntarily connect with him, and listen for his instructions.

Did you ever realize how watching the Dutch team could be so spiritual? Koeman is an icon who points us to Jesus. That's what all true icons do.

Jesus is the best coach ever. He knows everything about life and staying connected with the Father in every circumstance. He has put all of humanity back in its rightful place – as God's beloved children. He has destroyed the work of the enemy. He says "come to me, I'm trustworthy. You're tired and you're burdened. I understand. Believe God's opinion over you: you are wonderfully made, full of potential. I want to help you in every situation you face. Let me refresh you now. Learn of me; I've breathed my life into you. Count on that now! We are in this together. My invitation is for you, right now."

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## Huisgroepen:

Ijsbreker: wat is je favoriete manier om te ontspannen overdag: 'tussen de bedrijven door'?

Lees samen Matthew 11:25-30. Luister alsof je een van de menigde bent.

Hoe ervaar je zelf de uitnodiging van Jezus: komt tot Mij?

Heb je ooit wel eens last van het gevoel 'jezelf moeten bewijzen'? Heb je dat gevoel ooit in je geloofsleven of met andere christenen?