



The Comfort of Christ

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28.)

*“The most important thing that ever happens is letting ourselves be loved and comforted by God. ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ (Psalm 46:10).” —Brennan Manning, *The Relentless Tenderness of Jesus**

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7)

One of Jesus’ most precious gifts to those who follow him would have to be **comfort**. In using the term, **comfort**, I am not writing of a material comfort, as if Jesus promises his followers great wealth, perfect health, or an easy life. No, far from it.

The Comfort of Christ of which I write is a spiritual gift. This spiritual gift is firmly rooted in faith, in trust and in an intimate relationship we share with Christ Jesus himself.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus invites *all who are weary and burdened* to come to him. Jesus extends the ultimate invitation to experience him; to step towards him and to receive his rest, comfort, love, and grace.

How can we put a price on the **comfort of Christ**? When we are in need, alone, suffering loss, or fighting battles with anxious care, fear, doubt and worry, Jesus waits for us to *come to him*. His invitation is priceless.

As he waits for us, Jesus does so with a tender care. As Brennan Manning writes, *the most important thing...is letting ourselves be loved*

and comforted by God. Life can be more than dark at times. It certainly was for Brennan Manning. Brennan suffered from years of repeated bouts with loneliness, depression, anxiety and the long-term effects of alcoholism. He often felt his life left him on the outside of Christ’s love and care. He believed there could be **no comfort** for him. Perhaps, we can feel the same way too.

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At such low points, the tough stuff of life can be easier to believe. **How can Jesus love me and care for me when I fall down so easily? Why would Jesus want to invite me to come and receive his comfort when I feel so worthless?**

Brennan Manning knew well these depths of despair. Whether due to our own weaknesses and limitations, or due to life as it simply unfolds, we can know these depths, as well. It is central to the human experience.

Jesus knew all about the tough stuff of life. Jesus had been thrown out of his own hometown. He had been held at arm’s length by people he loved, tested, tried, taunted and rejected by the religious leaders of his day.

Jesus was misunderstood by his own followers, betrayed, denied, left alone, beaten and ultimately put to death. He knew intimately the worst of human experience. He

knew better than anyone what it was to **need comfort**.

Jesus calls to us with a voice of relentless tenderness. Jesus’ voice calls us to be still and to trust that he has us, no matter what. In the moment of our greatest need, letting ourselves be loved and comforted by him can feel unnatural.

Believing in his tender care can seem too good to be true. But, the gift of his faith within us leads us to trust. The intimate relationship we share with him, by him, leads us to believe. Jesus helps us to hear his voice.

Every time we hear his voice which calls us the Beloved, we discover a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply, writes Henri Nouwen in his book, *The Life of the Beloved*. The comfort of Christ comes from hearing his voice.

This comfort is firmly rooted in faith, in trust and in our relationship with him. Like the Good Shepherd calling to his sheep, Jesus calls to us in our darkest moments. Jesus calls with a voice we know well; his voice of tender care.

As Christ-followers, our risen Lord leads us to share **the comfort of Christ** with the world around us. If anything, our world today is a world of endless cares; a world of anxieties, fears, and worries. Ours is a world of those who are weary and burdened.

Through Christ in us, we bring **comfort** to the world. We bring his precious gift of grace in the darkest of times. His love and grace are that comfort. His relentless tenderness is that priceless gift. □

—Ed Dunn