



At Home Worship for Faith and Hope

Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 24, 2021

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

*** Call to Worship**

*If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens,
come to me and I will give you rest.*

Take the yoke I give you.

Put it on your shoulders and learn from me.

I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest.

This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light.

Christ calls us to come to worship

To rest from the things that are troubling us

To learn what Christ can teach of life

To realize what we can offer to others

And so to return into the world to serve

Let us worship God

Either Sing/Read the Song Below or Listen to a Worship Song

Opening Prayer

Father, Lord of heaven and earth, we gather in Your presence with thanksgiving and praise for the way in which You have revealed Yourself to us. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, we have come to know and love You; we have seen Your love and mercy in action; we have caught a glimpse of Your heart, and we have heard the call to follow. Continue to reveal Yourself to us as we worship. May Your Holy Spirit open our minds and hearts to Your presence here, and to the word that You have for us this morning. We long to meet You here, and to know You better. In the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Children’s Moments This Week

“Help with a Heavy Load”

See Below

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of gratitude with grit! Lift up with thanksgiving to God for the ways He has helped you through these difficult days.

Sing the Doxology Together

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayers of Our Hearts

“An Invitation to Exchange My Burden for Rest”

~ Source Unknown

²⁸ Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

There is a song that the mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers-the saints of old use to sing that says: *I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus, I cannot bear these burdens alone. I must tell Jesus all of my trials; I cannot bear these burdens alone; In my distress He kindly will help me; He ever loves and cares for His own. I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! I cannot bear my burdens alone; I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! Jesus can help me, Jesus alone.*

Do the above words describe your condition this morning? Are you weary, weak, worn, burdened, stressed, confused, burned out, confused, depressed, hurt, worried?

If we could be honest, we all at one time or another in our lives have been OR are sometimes burden with the issues of life. God already knows about it. He knows everything about us and that is why He wrote this text to give us comfort. God knew that in our lives a day would come when the cares of this world would try to overtake us, but God being God would never leave us to ourselves. He loves us too much to leave us alone. He declares it in His Word in Matthew 28:20, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Regardless of what our burden may be on today, God, our Heavenly Father, Our Everlasting Father, Our giver of everlasting life, mercy, peace and joy, is sending forth an invitation to all of us to ***“come to His throne of grace where we will find mercy and grace in our time of need. He invites us to come this morning, take Him at His Word and find rest. We are called to exchange our burdens for rest!***

We are living in a world where we can truly say “if it ain’t one thing, it’s another! It seems that people everywhere are suffering mentally and spiritually ***because they are trying to bear their burdens alone. They have resolved to fix their problems themselves, apart from God.***

I want you to know on today that you can trust God and ***cast your care upon Him for He cares for you.*** God has given us His assurance in this text that He is willing and able to carry our burdens. Will you surrender them to Him on today? Will you allow God to be God in your life? Will you tell yourself, I can’t do it, but God can?

Stop carrying around the burden of broken relationships, sickness loneliness, guilt, temptation, sin, etc.

God is calling you to release it this morning! He is calling us to a place of rest in Him. We have been choked up too long by the yokes of life that we have been carrying around our necks.

God’s healing power is available for our every affliction! God is calling you on this morning. He says in Isaiah 1:18-19 ***“Come now, and let us reason together”*** saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.¹⁹If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.

The invitation to exchange your burdens in for rest is being sent forth today by God! There is a clear call from Heaven to earth that says, ***“COME”***

Never underestimate the power of an invitation from God. It can and will save your life if you are willing to obey the ***“Call to COME”!***

WILL YOU? HAVE YOU ACCEPTED GOD'S INVITATION TO COME?

THE RELEASE OF YOUR BURDENS, WHATEVER THEY MAY BE IS ONE STEP FROM BEING TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU. WILL YOU COME? THE INVITATION HAS BEEN SENT FORTH!

GOD BLESS AND DO TELL THE LORD THANK YOU FOR AN INVITATION OF GRACE, MERCY AND REST ON THIS MORNING!

GOD IS WAITING! WILL YOU ANSWER? HAVE YOU ANSWERED?

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

God's Word

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!

Our Continuing Series on "Paradoxes"

Message

"Imagine That! Finding Rest Under a Yoke"

Pastor Clark

...see below or go to website to listen online

* Hymn of Faith

"Near to the Heart of God"

UMH 472

Blessing

*When we cry to God, looking for favor in God's sight,
God answers: "My presence will go with you,
and I will give you rest."
In the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus,
we are forgiven!
We will rest in God's mercy!*

God Will Take Care of You

1. Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
beneath his wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.

Refrain:

God will take care of you,
through every day, o'er all the way;
he will take care of you,
God will take care of you.

2. Through days of toil when heart doth fail,
God will take care of you;
when dangers fierce your path assail,
God will take care of you. [Refrain]

3. All you may need he will provide,
God will take care of you;
nothing you ask will be denied,
God will take care of you. [Refrain]

4. No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;
lean, weary one, upon his breast,
God will take care of you. [Refrain]

Near to the Heart of God

1. There is a place of quiet rest,
near to the heart of God;
a place where sin cannot molest,
near to the heart of God.

Refrain:

O Jesus, blest Redeemer,
sent from the heart of God,

hold us who wait before thee
near to the heart of God.

2. There is a place of comfort sweet,
near to the heart of God;
a place where we our Savior meet,
near to the heart of God.
(Refrain)

3. There is a place a place of full release,
near to the heart of God;
a place where all is joy and peace,
near to the heart of God.

Children's Moments: Help with a Heavy Load

Theme: Jesus will bear your burdens.

Object: A brick or some other heavy object

Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

How much do you think this brick weighs? Well, all bricks don't weigh exactly the same, but the average brick weighs about five pounds. That isn't very heavy, is it? You could easily pick up a brick. Do you think you could pick up this brick up and hold it with your arm straight out to the side of you like this? (Demonstrate it.) You might be able to hold it for a minute or two, but do you think you could hold it all day? No way! The longer you hold it, the heavier it feels.

That same thing is true of the burdens we carry around with us. What are some of those burdens? Here are a few examples: some of you may be having trouble with your school work, perhaps you are having trouble at home, perhaps you may have a serious illness, you may be feeling guilty about something you have done, your family may be having financial difficulties, or maybe one of your playmates has been making fun of you.

That is a pretty heavy load to have to carry by yourself, isn't it? Well the good news is you don't have to carry it alone! In our Bible lesson for today, Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Then he went on to say, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus is our helper. Sometimes we hold on to our burdens and try to carry them ourselves, but Jesus will help us, if we will let Him.

Whenever your load is too heavy, remember the words to this song:

I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus!

I cannot bear my burdens alone.

I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus!

Jesus can help me, Jesus alone.

Father, sometimes our burdens are more than we can bear. Help us to remember that Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." In his name we pray. Amen.

Imagine That! Finding Rest Under a Yoke

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT and MSG)

Introduction

As many of you know, we now offer **Faith Café** for the parents and staff at the Educare Preschool at Faith a couple of mornings each week. For those of us who help with **Faith Café**, one of the scenes we see over and over again is a little child coming in with a huge, oversized book bag almost as big as they are. It's full of books, their chromebook laptop, supplies, lunchbox, water bottle, jackets and gloves and hats for recess, and more. The sight of a child bent under the weight of that heavy book bag evokes our sympathy.

Researchers have found out that kids should not carry more than 15% of their bodyweight or they will impact their posture and experience back problems down the road. The bookbags we see are way beyond that weight!

What a sight! It is reminiscent of the paradox we look at today. It's only a few verses, so allow me to read it in two translations.

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." (NLT)

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (MSG)

As I begin, I want you to consider **what kind of burden are you carrying today?** We all carry some burdens of some sort.

Paul Brand, the famous missionary doctor among lepers, commented on this passage. I have often heard sermons on Matthew 11:28 or Matthew 11:29, but seldom has the sermon given equal weight to both verses. The reason? **They seem to contradict.** **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest," Jesus calls out. But he continues, paradoxically, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." Taken together, the two statements jar. Why would a person who is weary and burdened volunteer to take on a yoke?**

That certainly frames our next installment in our **Paradoxes Series**. As you have seen, these paradoxes are statements that at first seem confusing or perplexing, but upon closer inspection, reveal God's own thoughts, God's own ways, God's own heart. Paradoxes are windows into how God's Kingdom functions...so very different than the way things function here on earth.

Come to Me All Who Are Burned Out on Religion

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest.”

You might remember Jesus pares down the law to its core...to love God and love others. We might miss how revolutionary this was to Jesus’ audience. The Pharisees equated righteous living with law keeping. Their brand of religion was onerous, burdensome, external-focused. The message it communicated was you have to become—by sheer force of will—an excellent rule-keeper to win approval from God.

To give you a picture of how burdensome this had become, consider this. So zealous were they that they identified 613 laws that must be obeyed, and they considered all of them of equal importance. In fact, when the Pharisees questioned Jesus their intent was to trap Him into saying something that would reveal his disregard for the law because He showed disregard to the 613 laws.

Jesus surprised everyone when he declared that the core of the law could be captured in two expressions forming the Great Commandment.

Life is short, so we have to major on the most important. We cannot go around with 613 laws bouncing around in our heads as we live life. We need that simplified. We need focus. And with the Great Commandment we have that life focus. Life can be all too complex. Our minds and hearts get cluttered and clogged with all the competing demands. We desperately need to find out how to rest under the easy yoke of Jesus.

So Jesus calls out with the greatest invitation a burdened soul could ever hear: ***Come to Me!***

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest.”

Take My Easy Yoke Upon You

Dallas Willard has spoken with insight on this paradox: One of the lies in our culture today is, *“It’s hard to follow Christ.”* No, *it’s the easy way!* The transformation of the self is what leads to the blessed life and this is what Jesus is after. The person with the easiest, strongest life is the one who walks in the easy yoke with Christ. The world around us needs us to stand steady in the yoke.

“To depart from righteousness is to choose a life of crushing burdens, failures, and disappointments, a life caught in the toils of endless problems that are never resolved. Here is the source of that unending soap opera, that sometimes horror show known as normal human life. The ‘cost of discipleship,’ though it may take all we have, is small when compared to the lot of those who don’t accept Christ’s invitation to be part of his company in The Way of Life.”

What is the yoke? It refers to two oxen being yoked together to pull the load. The idea here is that *we're pulling Jesus' load with him*. His load is to bring the reign of God into ordinary human life. His message to everyone was, "Re-think your thinking because the kingdom of the heavens is now available to you." (Matthew 4:17, paraphrase)

The light load only comes when we're working alongside of Jesus in the Kingdom of God.

Who is the easy yoke of Jesus for? Who was Jesus speaking to when he offered his rhythms of grace? Dallas answered:

You might think Jesus was talking to anyone who is weary. Look at the context. Jesus has been facing great opposition in Matthew 11. Even John the Baptist is questioning him because he's not living up to his expectations. (If you follow Jesus long enough you'll get disappointed!) Jesus was rejected again and again because of the dominant view in society that put the stress on outward religious behavior and appearance.

But Jesus prays, *"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."* (Matthew 11:25, MSG) So Jesus was talking to these **ordinary people** who were **carrying a terrible religious burden** from the wise and learned religious scholars. **Religion wears you out**. Jesus is saying, **"Take the yoke of official religion off of you. Take my yoke on you."**

Learn the Unforced Rhythms of Grace

"Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Keep company with Jesus and we'll learn to live freely and lightly! Doesn't that sound refreshing? And oh how that is needed today! There aren't very many people living freely and lightly. We are a nation under duress. Despite our economic prosperity, our nation ranks among the world's highest in percentage of people struggling with depression. In our driven culture we have countless millions dealing with the diseases of hurry sickness that you have heard me mention many times before. Too many people try to manhandle their stress load by hurrying more and more. The amped up pressure intensifies to dangerous levels.

And those of us in the church are not in much better shape. Many live under the burden of a misshapen form of Christianity that tells them that they have to win God's approval with flawless performance. They labor under the heavy weight (think about those overloaded book bags) of nearly impossible expectations that steal their joy and sap the energy out of their faith.

Do you feel as though you are trapped on a never-ending treadmill based on your own efforts to try to earn God's forgiveness, God's approval, and God's acceptance? That is Christian **religion**. If you are

trying to earn your own forgiveness and thinking that God is constantly mad at you, ***I am here to tell you that is not the heart of God!***

I found this online as a series of probing questions: *"Are you low-key honestly and downrightly tired of religion...doing the same thing, going to the same place with the same results? Done with endless prayers without answers, church meetings going nowhere? Of Bible Studies that end in heated arguments on perspectives...or over-hyped discipleship programs no one plans to puts to practice? Churches who are wayyyy too holy a sinner could never enter or too normal and lukewarm a sinner cannot be changed there?"*

To all of that Jesus says, STOP! COME TO ME! I AM THE WAY to a better life...a life of keeping company with Me, a life of living freely and lightly, a faith full of joy and peace.

Our Lord and Savior is humble and gentle. Jesus invites you to share the yoke alongside Him. You can learn the rhythms of grace from the Teacher. And along the way, you will have a front-row seat to witness the coming of His Kingdom into this earthly realm.

Again, Dallas Willard helps us: *"Jesus doesn't push; He pulls you along gently. In life some things that can be pulled can't be pushed,"* Dallas explained. *"Making disciples is a matter of drawing people in by who we are. You can't push this. A disciple is so ravished by Jesus and life in the Kingdom of God that they want to become like him." **Jesus is wooing us, "Come to me... I will give you rest... Take my yoke upon you... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."***

Conclusion

Pastor Bryan Loritts shares this personal story of the time he took his young son to the doctor: Listen in to his description of this harrowing encounter. *There I am sitting in that doctor's office with one of my sons, and, as you can imagine, he does not like to have blood taken from him. Who does? I'm there with him. I've canceled my appointment, I'm in the midst of the trial with him. He's saying, "Dad, I can't do it. I just can't do it." the nurse is saying, "Here's the deal, buddy. We've got this numbing spray, and we'll spray the numbing spray on you. We'll stick the needle in you. You won't even feel it once you got this numbing ..."*

He's says, "I'm just not trying to hear that. I cannot do it." On and on he goes. Finally, I said to the nurse, "Ma'am, listen. I know what I'm about to ask you is out of bounds, but can you stick me first? Can you do it without the numbing spray? Because I just need to show my son." She says, "Yes, I'll do it. We'll keep this between us." I put my son on my lap. I said, "Watch Daddy." Rolled up my sleeve. Stuck my arm out, and the whole time I'm telling myself Don't flinch. You're trying to set a good example for your son. They stuck me. They drew blood. A smile came over my kid's face. Yeah, he was still a little nervous, but when he saw that Daddy went through what he was about to go through already, no numbing spray, he stuck his arm out and it gave him the courage.

What Jesus is saying, when you find yourself in the midst of hard times, even if those hard times come as a result of the hardness of trying to practice a religion that wears you out, look to the place where they drew Jesus' blood. Look to the cross, and there you will find rest for your souls. That's why the writer of Hebrews would tell his friends "We don't have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses but one who has been tempted with all things, as we are, yet without sin." Whatever burdens you're going through, Jesus says look to me, follow my example, and you don't have to wait until the trial is over to find rest. I can offer you immediate rest now. Will you just come to me? Just take my yoke. Just learn from me, and you'll find rest for your souls.

ARE YOU TIRED? WORN OUT?
BURNED OUT ON RELIGION? **COME TO ME.**

GET AWAY WITH ME AND YOU'LL RECOVER YOUR LIFE. I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO
TAKE A REAL REST. WALK WITH ME AND WORK WITH ME - WATCH HOW I DO IT.

LEARN THE UNFORCED RHYTHMS OF GRACE.

I WON'T LAY ANYTHING HEAVY OR ILL-FITTING ON YOU. KEEP COMPANY WITH
ME AND YOU'LL LEARN TO LIVE FREELY AND LIGHTLY. ~MATTHEW 11:28-30

