

Year A – Matthew 11:16-19; 25-30

July 5, 2020

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and from God our Creator! Amen.

One can almost sense the emotions of Jesus coming through the text. From frustration and anger of the religious leaders and elite in verse 16 whom just will never be satisfied and will always want more. Perhaps, some sadness and disappointment over how they viewed John and then how they judged Jesus, himself, for those he associated and ate with. And then we turn to some of the most well known, well-read, and turned to verses in the Bible in Matthew 11:25-30. Can't you just almost envision Jesus standing there, before the crowds, with tears rolling down his face as he looks toward His Father in heaven and gives God glory, honor, and thanks? Can't you hear the passion, tenderness, and love in his voice as he speaks of a very intimate Parent-Child relationship he and God have? And don't you almost get goose bumps of excitement that Jesus will not keep that relationship private but wants to share it with anyone willing to listen and invite them into that special bond? And then at the conclusion of the text can't you see Jesus standing before the crowds, eyes focused squarely on them, arms open wide, calling out and inviting the people to come to him? Can you hear it? "Come to me, all that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest?" Or listen to Eugene Peterson's translation from *The Message*ⁱ, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you will recover your life. I will 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 will not lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

These final few verses are a breath of fresh air. They are like the breeze that blows in with the crashing tide of the sea bringing a burst of cool air bringing momentary relief to the one who sits with her toes in the sand on a balmy summer day. These words are a promise that brings life. They are an

invitation to learn the unforced rhythms of grace. Find solace in the one whose love is limitless.

Sometime ago I heard the story of one who was weary. Rightfully so, this gentleman had recently experienced a tragic loss that left him, which had left him burdened under the weight of grief, anger, and hopelessness. His heart had become numb, cold, and seemingly void of love. One day, while shopping for groceries, which the man begrudgingly did, he approached the cart of a mother and her 4-year-old daughter, who was celebrating her birthday. As the two carts passed, the young girl looked at the man and exclaimed with a smile on her face, excitement in her voice, joy in her heart, “Hi old person, it’s my birthday today!” But that was not all, the birthday girl had the audacity to ask the cranky old man for a hug, which he agreed to and so did her mother. The young girl asked her mom to take a picture. Later, when recounting the event to a local reporter, the mother stated, “She zeroed in on him like a missile. And she did not want anything from him. She just wanted to make him feel loved and give him a hug. And his little lip quivered, and he was teared up and it was just sweet.” The man told the reporter it was the first time in quite some time he smiled and had been that happy and his smile continues to grow to this day. One simple invitation for a hug and picture turned into a lifetime relationship between the two families and they now gather weekly. The man believes this young girl is, quite literally, an angel. “She opened me to a love that I didn’t know existed ... and made room in my heart for a lot more,” he told the reporter.ⁱⁱ

In some ways, this unexpected and life-changing encounter, captures the invitation Jesus offers the crowd gathered around him to hear his teaching. This young girl offered an invitation to the older gentleman of a love that allowed him to recover his life. Her hug was the door to experience grace he had not encountered in some time. His aching heart and weary body gave way to joy, hope, and a new outlook on life. No longer was he alone in his pain. He now had the young girl and her mother to assist him on the road to healing and wholeness.

It has been quite a journey we have been on in recent months. Many are weary, worn out and carrying heavy burdens. Many feel they are traveling this road alone. Perhaps, that is where you are at this morning. Listen again to this invitation of Jesus that is sure today as it was all those years ago:

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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.” (Matthew 11:28-30 NRSV) Or as Peterson concludes in his translation, “Learn the unforced rhythms of grace and find solace in the one whose love is limitless.”

We search in so many places for meaning. We look under one more box as we seek respite and relief. We turn page after page to help us get back up when we fall. So many times, these end up being up being vacated places, empty boxes, or blank pages. Yet, there is only one place we need turn. One invitation we need accept. That of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We need not walk alone as in our baptism we were yoked to Jesus. A yoke was placed upon two animals to lighten the load in pulling heavy load making the journey much easier. Life in Christ is one in which we continually learn and grow as his teachings continue to form us into his disciples. A better understanding of who he is and all he has to offer us. His teaching is not burdensome, but rather is quite the opposite. His teaching reveals to us the rhythm of grace and the song of love. Come to me he says. No matter what it is you carry. No matter what pain, fear, guilt, shame, or angst you harbor. Come to me he says, and you will find rest. You will find hope. You will be comforted. You will be blessed. You will be filled. You will find mercy. You will see God. You will be called child of God. You will receive the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice and be glad.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus! Amen.

ⁱ Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-more-perfect-union-widower-unexpected-friendship-with-little-girl-transforms-his-life/>