

Yoked With Jesus

Matthew 11:25-30

²⁵At 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. ²⁶Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

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. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

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"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28, 30). These are some of the most comforting words in all of Scripture. They are a gracious invitation to anyone who is weary and overburdened – and that includes each of us at one time or another.

Then why is the average daily experience of many Christians exactly the opposite of the rest-filled existence we crave and Jesus promises to provide? We live in a world of nerve-jangling noise, ever-accelerating pace, frenetic activity and endless demands. Yet we yearn for repose. The paradox is that in order for us to be *un*burdened, we first have to be *burdened* by Jesus' guidance and expectations. Yes, our Lord makes demands on us, but he tells us that what he asks of us is "easy" and that the load he asks us to shoulder is "light."

The burden of which Jesus speaks is his expectation that we be gentle and humble in heart. It is the quality of remaining serene and tranquil in the midst of the raging deluge of challenges life hurls at us. Jesus' rest entails an inner peace that is not dependent on circumstances. Even if we have never personally experienced this rest, we can see it modeled in the life of Jesus.

While the disciples grew panicky in a storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus slept soundly in the bottom of the lurching boat (Matthew 8:24). Our Lord was never in a hurry, never frantic. Busy? Always – but not weary or burdened by the staggering weight of responsibility. Paul reminds us that we too can experience that kind of inner quietness, because God's peace guards our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:4-7).

Many people today have no frame of reference for understanding the word *yoke*, but the people listening to Jesus knew exactly what he was referring to. A yoke fit around the neck of an ox, and reins and a plow were attached to it. When the ox strained against the yoke he at the same time pulled the plow. The yoke represented backbreaking work – for both ox and farmer.

Jesus told us that his yoke is easy, but that seems contradictory – until we consider how young oxen were trained to plow. An inexperienced ox was yoked with a well-trained animal. Everywhere the more experienced and stronger ox went, the younger plodded along as well. It learned to plow, but without exerting much effort. The trained ox did all the real pulling.

When we give our lives to Jesus, we are "yoked" together with him. He does the pulling, and we follow and learn, thereby finding real joy and purpose and rest. It is only when we choose to tug in an opposite direction from him that the yoke becomes an irritant, and we chafe at the instruction that the Lord intends to use as a means to draw us closer to himself.

## **Discovery:**

*Do you view the responsibilities of your Christian life as burdensome, or do you feel that Jesus' burden for you is light? If you do feel overburdened, think of some ways in which you can readjust your priorities. Try to see yourself today as a disciple of Jesus, walking with him and imitating his every move, his every attitude and action.*

*Do you feel overwhelmed at times during your Christian walk? If so, in what ways?*

*How would you share with someone the way Jesus' yoke is light?*

*In what ways can you share your faith with others?*

*What, if any, obstacles do you face when sharing Jesus with people?*

*How have you tugged in an opposite direction from God? How did you get back on track?*