

Ordinary 14A - 2020

The Burden Bearing Christ Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

There is a wonderful legend concerning the quiet years of Jesus, the years prior to his visible ministry. The legend claims that Jesus the carpenter was one of the master yoke-makers in the Nazareth area. People came from miles around for a yoke, hand carved and crafted by Jesus son of Joseph. When customers arrived with their team of oxen Jesus would spend considerable time measuring the team, their height, the width, the space between them, and the size of their shoulders. Within a week, the team would be brought back and he would carefully place the newly made yoke over the shoulders, watching for rough places, smoothing out the edges and fitting them perfectly to this particular team of oxen.

That's the yoke Jesus invites us to take. Do not be misled by the word "easy" for its root word in Greek speaks directly of the tailor-made yokes: they were "well-fitting." The yoke Jesus invites us to take, the yoke that brings rest to weary souls, is one that is made exactly to our lives and hearts. The yoke he invites us to wear fits us well, does not rub us nor cause us to develop sore spirits and is designed for two. His yokes were always designed for two. And our yoke-partner is none other than Christ himself. Running throughout all scripture from the beginning to the end is the theme that ours is a burden bearing Christ. He is not just a Lord whom we burden, and we do, but a Lord who actually solicits our burdens. I want to think with you this morning concerning that thought. He who would be effective must first be free from his burdens. And, it is Christ who frees us.

Did You Use All Your Strength?

I remember an old story about a little boy who was out helping dad with the yard work. Dad asked him to pick up the rocks in a certain area of the yard. Dad looked over and saw him struggling to pull up a huge rock buried in the dirt. The little boy struggled and struggled while Dad watched. Finally, the boy gave up and said, "I can't do it." Dad asked, "Did you use all of your strength?" The little boy looked hurt and said, "Yes, sir. I used every ounce of strength I have." The father smiled and said, "No you didn't. You didn't ask me to help." The father walked over and then the two of them pulled that big rock out of the dirt. One of the great Biblical truths seems impossible. Liberty comes through being yoked with Christ. (by Billy D. Strayhorn from *Freedom through the Yoke*)

Rest

One man challenged another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the other fellow had chopped substantially more wood than he had. "I don't get it," he said. "Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did." "But you didn't notice," said the winning woodsman, "that I was sharpening my ax when I sat down to rest."

The Sweetest Sound

There is a story that Hebrew families tell their children to help them understand the fourth commandment. The fourth commandment reads, "Six days you shall labor but on the seventh you shall rest." The story is called, "The Sweetest Sound." The main character in the story is King Ruben. It goes something like this. The king asked his royal subjects, "What is the sweetest melody of all?" Early the next morning they gathered all sorts of musicians. The sound awoke the king and all morning he listened to their tunes. But, after listening to all of them he could not tell which was the sweetest sound. Finally, one subject suggested they all play together. It was so noisy the king couldn't think. About that moment a woman, dressed in her Sunday best, pushed to the front of the crowd and stepped forward. "O, king," she said, "I have the answer to your question." The king was surprised since she had no instrument. "Why didn't you come earlier?" he asked. She replied, "I had to wait until the setting of the sun." The musicians were still playing and the king told them all to stop. The woman then took two candles and placed them on the king's balcony rail. She lit them just as the sun continued to set. The flames glowed in the evening darkness. She then lifted her voice and said, "Blessed art thou, O Lord, Our God, King of the universe, who sanctified us with the commandments and commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights." She then said, "He who has an ear, let him hear." Everyone was completely still. "What is that?" asked the king. "He could not hear a sound. The woman then replied, "What you hear is the sound of rest, the sweetest melody of all." Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is also the sweetest sound any of us can hear. (by Keith Wagner from *True Freedom*)