

I WILL GIVE YOU REST



Welcome to Worship. In this act of worship we take time to reflect on Jesus' words in Matthew 11:

'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.'

Whatever has brought you here, you are welcome. It is our prayer that you find comfort and blessing in this act of worship.

This service is also available recorded in its entirety here:
<https://www.hounslowmethodist.org.uk/i-will-give-you-rest>

COME, LET US SING OF A WONDERFUL LOVE

SINGING THE FAITH #443

1 Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

3 Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2 Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
joyfully came;
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

4 Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
come and abide,
lifting my life, till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride;
seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Robert Walmsley (1831–1905)

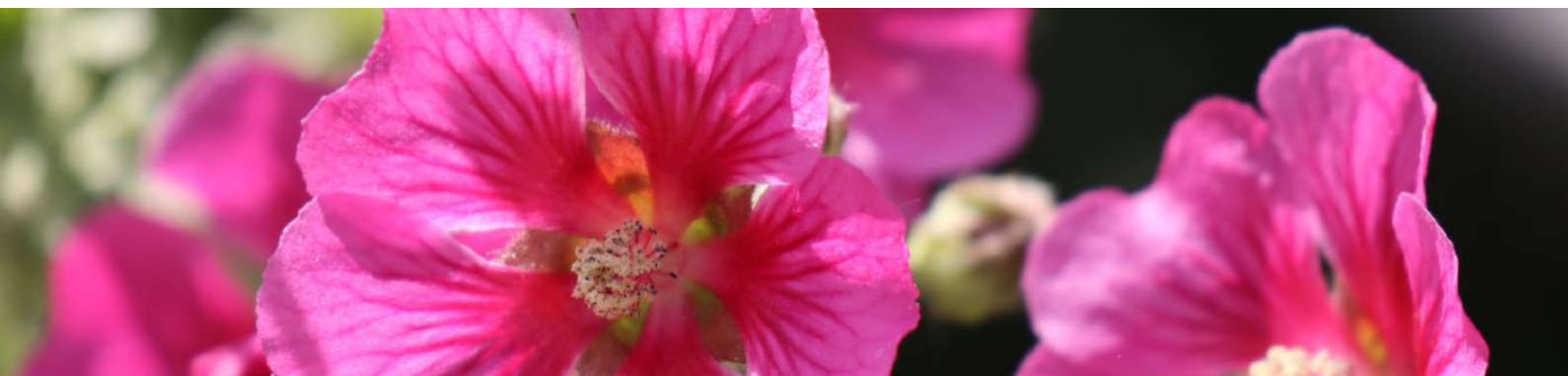


MATTHEW 11:25-30

JESUS THANKS HIS FATHER

At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'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.'



PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

This week we are giving thanks for creation, which has burst out with colour and new life while we were in lockdown. You may use this short prayer and then reflect on the pictures.

Creator God, While we lockdown creation burst out! Thank you for new life. Thank you for the beauty of your world. We see joy and hope around us. Thank you. Amen.



REFLECTION

I WILL GIVE YOU REST

Reflect on the words of Jesus:

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

What heavy burdens are you carrying?

Remember the words of Jesus:

“Come - I will give you rest”



THE RABBI'S YOKE

SERMON FROM JOHN

What do you want to be when you grow up? It is usually a fun question to ask children. At the school where I work, children are often asked the question. Alongside the usual round of firefighters, vets, teachers and doctors are a few more unusual ones that come up:

Spiderman, a unicorn doctor, a billionaire, not your average occupations! One child who was 7 announced that when he grew up he wanted to be 8! But my favourite is an 11 year old who told me she wanted to be the Prime Minister. Knowing her, I think she just might, and I think she will probably do a better job than more recent incumbents!

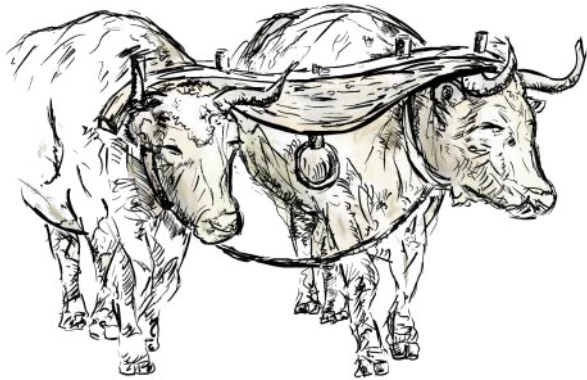
At the time of Jesus, ambitions were limited. For most ordinary boys, they would take their father's profession, whatever it was, fisherman, carpenter, herder, tentmaker are amongst some of them. Gender equality wasn't really a thing in those days, so girls had a very different path!

But the ultimate path for boys was to take on the Rabbi's yoke, to become a disciple of the Rabbi, a follower. But to do this you had to be good, in fact you had to be the best. The Jewish community in Israel and Palestine at the time of Jesus were some of the most devout in the world. The Mishnah, the rabbinic interpretation of the law, describes the schooling for a young Jewish boy in Jesus' time:

'At five years old [one is fit] for the Scripture, at ten years the Mishnah (oral Torah, interpretations) at thirteen for the fulfilling of the commandments, at fifteen the Talmud (making Rabbinic interpretations), at eighteen the bride-chamber, at twenty pursuing a vocation, at thirty for authority (able to teach others).'

If at any stage of the process you didn't 'make the grade' in this process then you would return to your family trade. But for the best of the best, they would take on the 'yoke of the commandments' and therefore also the 'yoke of the rabbi'. In addition to this we have to remember that Judaism is a covenant relationship, rather than a faith relationship. In Judaism, God has chosen you as a people and out of gratitude you need to observe his rules. This is what it means to take on the 'yoke of the commandments'. This is different to the message of Christianity is altogether different. It doesn't matter who you are the relationship you have with God is based on faith.

So what is a yoke?



A yoke is most commonly used to harness animals, cattle and oxen to enable them to work in the fields or other carrying tasks. It was usually made of a heavy wood strong enough so the animals could carry whatever burden was placed upon them.

To take on the rabbinic yoke was to take on the burdens of the Rabbi's understanding of the Torah and this was very strict indeed. For those few students who got to study with a famous rabbi they gave their and all they learnt to follow his every rule, whatever this demanded.

Now listen again to Matthew's words:

'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.'

Now you have the remarkable truth at the heart of Jesus' message: 'Take my yoke upon you' – become my followers and I have altogether different way. 'my yoke is easy', 'my burden is light'.

What an offer! No longer do you have to strive, to carry your own burdens yourself. No longer do you have to walk that long, exhausting, stressful, anxious path. What Jesus was saying is that there is another way. Lay down those burdens, let me deal with them. Just rest and when you have rested, when you feel strong, learn from me for my way is easy, my burden isn't heavy. It's not like the cattle pulling heavy weights, my yoke really is light.

The trouble is, that as humans we have a natural capacity to half listen! We so often think this is for Sunday, and then we go off and get sucked into the busyness of our existence, until our 'backpack' or yoke starts to become so heavy we can no longer function. I wonder, are you a 'half listener'?

If I can only take one thing with me from this lockdown desert island, it will be the conviction that there must be a better way for us all to live. There must be a better way for the church to be. One that doesn't involve endless rounds of long and fruitless meetings, but one where we remember our core purpose, to walk in the footsteps of our Rabbi Jesus, to live and share his message of love and hope for all.

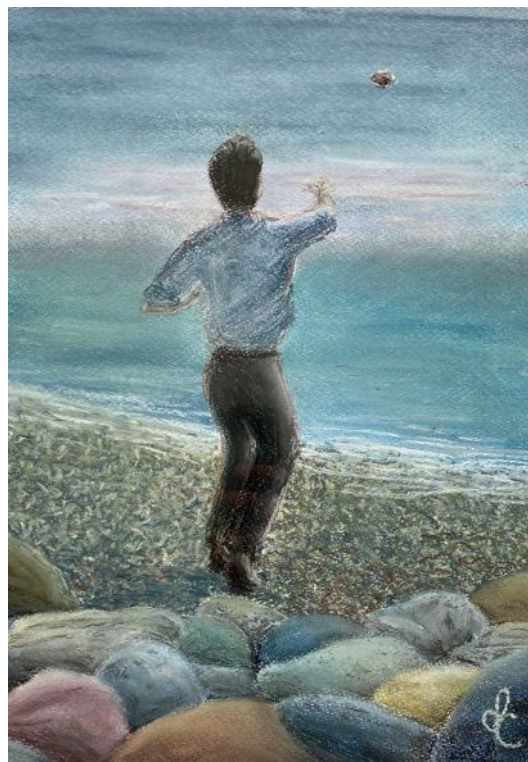
There's a story told when the great library of Alexandria was burnt down, one book survived. It is said that in that book was the secret of the Touchstone and it was to be found on the edge of the Black Sea. It was a stone that unlike other stones was warm to the touch, but once you owned it, everything you touched from then on would turn to gold.

So one day a man sold everything they owned to begin the search on the shores of the weeks and months passed, but he was undeterred, faithfully he picked up the stones and threw them into the sea. Until one day, he reached down and picked up a stone, the Touchstone! He picked it up, it was warm! He held it briefly and before he could do anything else, he Threw it into the sea with the rest of the stones!

Jesus said, 'Come to me and I will give you rest'. Let's not miss the chance, because we have been too busy doing what we have always done, because we have been too busy arguing about the way we should do this and that in the church. Let's not miss the chance to find our very own touchstone in the God who wants us to rest in him.

And may you find rest for your souls.

Amen



PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

FROM REV. ADAM

In these prayers we offer to God our concerns, our sorrows and our joys:

God of all hope we call on you today.
We pray for all those who live in fear
Fear of illness
Fear for loved ones
Fear of others reactions to them

May your spirit give us a sense of calmness and peace

We pray for your church in this time of uncertainty
For those people who are worried about attending worship
For those needing to make decisions in order to take care of others
For those who feel more isolated by not being able to attend

Grant us your wisdom
Holy God we remember that you have promised nothing will separate us from your love demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ.
Help us turn our eyes hearts and minds to you.
Amen

Our prayer of intercession:

You call us to speak to you in prayer even when the places we would usually go to are not available

Help us to know your spirit's presence wherever we pray.

Today we especially pray for those who are living in fear, give them your strength

For those who have not yet realised the urgency of

the situation. Protect them and all of us from harm.

I especially want to pray and thank you Lord for all the key workers who have been so dedicated in providing sacrificial services in different ways during the lockdown.

We pray for those in the health and social care sector, education and childcare, food and other necessary goods, utility workers, key public services, local and national government, public servants, national security and the transport sector.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our Prayer
Amen



I, THE LORD OF SEA AND SKY

SINGING THE FAITH #663

Daniel L. Schutte (b. 1947)
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BLESSING

The peace of God be in your heart
The grace of God be in your words
The love of God be in your hands
The joy of God be in your soul
and in the song that your life sings.

Thank you to everyone involved in this service.
The cover Yoke illustration is by Matthew Logan.
The Photos are from John Logan