

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – July 18, 2020

The Lord be with you.

Do you ever feel like you've got more than you can handle? Do you sometimes feel loaded down or burdened needing rest?

Let these words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30. let them flow over you. Come to me, all you that are weary and 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.

In these days of pandemic, lock-downs, unemployment, unrest, Jesus offers rest. Why twice in just one statement, Jesus promises, I will give you rest. You will find rest for your souls.

Notice who it is that Jesus invites to rest. All you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens. A few nights ago, I was lying, awake in bed, feeling, weary, feeling burdens. And sensed Jesus saying to me, hey Tim, why are you carrying all of that? Well, we don't you let me carry it, and I began to feel such a peace knowing that God never made you or me to bear life burdens alone, God created us intending us to live life with him.

Now, in this text, Jesus invites us to take my yoke and learn from me, that is the language of the first century rabbi. At the time of Jesus Rabbi's would search out the looking for a few young men who were the best and brightest, and they would call them to take up their yoke... That's what they call it. A yoke was a rabbi's teaching. A rabbi's teaching about how to live, how to keep Torah. And let me tell you, it was a long list of dos and don'ts rules, minute legal observance, and that meant that peasant people already weighed down by life or weigh down by the legalism of the rule-keeping, and here comes Jesus, who instead of calling just to select few, Jesus invites all. Come to me all. And that's you, that's me.

Come to me, all you that are wary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest, take my yoke upon you. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart. Whether religious leaders were demanding and harsh, Jesus is gentle and humble in heart. And with Jesus, we will find rest for our souls.

Now as Jesus invites all to come to him and take his yoke. I would suggest that he goes from speaking like a rabbi who offers a yoke, he goes to speaking like a carpenter, who also offers a yoke... For you see, Jesus was not only a rabbi, but he was also a village carpenter, wasn't he, who knew something about yokes that oxen wore.

We learn this from Justin Martyr, by the way, he learned that last name by being one of the early martyrs. Justin Martyr was an early church father who grew up near the Jordan River, and writing in the 2nd century, Justin Martyr tells of Jesus coming to the Jordan, and he says of Jesus, quote he was deemed the carpenter because he was in the habit of working as a carpenter among man, making plows and yokes. And did you hear that last part, making plows and yokes. It tells us that Jesus knew something about measuring an ox for a well-fitted yoke, a yoke that would not rub or irritate.

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So notice what Jesus is saying about his yoke, that he invites you in me to take... Jesus says, My yoke is easy. The Greek word translated here is easy, it's the word Crestas, as it sounds like Christos, doesn't it? But Crestas means well fitted, suitable, gracious. It's like a yoke that is tailor-made for an ox, a carpenter could not make a one-size-fits-all, so as a village carpenter, Jesus knew how to measure, to carve to fit a yoke for each individual ox so that it would not chafe or rub the animal's neck.

So you see what Jesus is doing here. Jesus is inviting you and me to take his yolk, one that is perfectly fitted for you, one that is perfectly fitted for me... Take my yoke u [on you and learn from me, for my yoke is easy. Crestas well fitted for you. Jesus has a special made yoke for you. Perfectly fitted for you. So that you will find His yoke easy and his burden light.

One of my seminary professors, Dwight Pentecost told us one day about when he was a student many years earlier. That he would go out to preach at a small country church, and one day as he was in that little community, he saw... He saw a farmer plowing with a team of oxen, he saw something that he thought was very strange as he saw one full-grown ox yoked together with a much younger smaller ox. And that didn't make any sense to my professor, and so he asked the farmer, Why are you plowing with Oxen of two different sizes, and the farmer said, he says, Well, look close, but look at the little one, see this line is not connected to the plow is it the little one is not pulling any weight, rather he's learning how to walk in a yoke with another oxen.

Now, when you take Jesus' specially made yoke onto you, you will find Jesus in the yoke with you, and you will find that it is Jesus who is pulling the weight, and you will find that His yoke is easy. His burden is light.

I like the way the message version translates, these verses, 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.

There is real rest in coming to Jesus, so come, come, and why not tell Jesus today how weary and heavy burden you are, and take that heavy load, your caring, and give it over to Him, and you will... You will find rest for your soul.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler in the pilgrim way.

Thanks for listening until next time.

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