

“Yoked with Jesus”

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill

Sunday July 5, 2020

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

What is the most important thing you will do in your day – today or any day?

If I was in the sanctuary I'd love to hear the answers.

The most important thing you will do, or should do... breathe, get out of bed, eat, exercise, take your medication, kiss your spouse, make your bed, tackle some project, feed your kids, show love and kindness...

There are a lot of things that are important for our days- every day.

I would argue, and I think our text argues that the most important thing we can do every day is be yoked with Jesus.

Let's consider this whole passage of scripture.

Matthew chapter 10 was about Jesus sending his people out to serve his mission, but that it would be difficult.

Jesus sent out his followers saying to them; “I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves;” and “beware of them for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues.”

Chapter 11 is about the opposition Jesus was facing.

John the Baptist questioned whether Jesus was the Messiah, there are the woes to the cities that don't respond to Jesus' message, and Jesus thanks God for the “Little ones” who accept his message, the implication is that the powerful, and wise have rejected Jesus and his teaching.

Life as a follower of Jesus isn't easy.

This invitation to come to Jesus and to find in him rest for our souls is not some short-cut or easy path.

What Jesus offers is not a hammock, but a yoke.

In Judaism, the yoke was a symbol of obedience to the law and wisdom of God.

Jesus' yoke is to follow his commands, learning to live with a willingness to serve others with humility and mercy.

Jesus' yoke is “easy,” and his burden is “light” not because there is little to do or the way is safely paved.

To the contrary, there is a cross to be carried and the world is full of wolves. The yoke of Jesus is easy and his burden is light because it is the way of God, and it is profoundly satisfying to the human soul.

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me”

What will you learn from Jesus?

What we learn in coming to Jesus is not so much a set of rules - but you will enter a relationship with the Father through the Son.

You will learn the hidden things that are revealed to infants- not the wise.

Jesus did deeds of power and John came preaching a powerful message and yet so many people turned away from them.

John was too ascetic, Jesus was too lax.

John had fellowship with no one as a desert preacher, Jesus had fellowship with everyone welcoming and healing them.

There are so many things that keep us from coming to Jesus and accepting his invitation - busyness, pride, our own sinfulness, our desire to be our own masters and self-made, our desire to fix all problems, our pride even before God.

It takes considerable humility to embrace this mystery, and to come to Jesus and learn from him.

For in so doing we take ourselves out of a position to control anything, to predict or manage, or to pose as authorities.

We give up the rules and our own righteousness and what we can do for God or to please God, and we learn Jesus' way, a way that is gentle and humble of heart.

We learn a way of service and lifting up, caring for the least, providing healing and the good news that the kingdom of God is in our midst.

The yoke is well-fitting and the burden is shared with Jesus.

And when we come to God's word, Jesus' life and teaching it is not then as an answer book, but a doorway into the world of God's mystery.

The Bible is a doorway that teaches us about Jesus and reveals to us the mystery of the Father, and invites us to learn and be in the presence of more meaning than we can comprehend.

It is the doorway into a relationship.

So the most important part of any day, every day, is to be yoked to Jesus in prayer, in worship, in reading the Bible, so then everything else finds its proper place and meaning, and there is strength and help to do all the other important things well.

Then there is help to set down those things that are broken or disjointed and life-taking.

One of the things that has happened as a result of the pandemic is that we have a bit more time and space to think about our lives.

The “normal” has been disrupted.

Routines have changed.

So I encourage you in this time to consider your life, how your time was spent, what filled your days.

Consider some of those ill-fitting burdens you’ve been carrying, maybe there are some you don’t want to pick up again.

With all of Jesus’ teachings, if you have heard the word of truth spoken to your heart, then you must make some choices.

Maybe this is the time to learn a different way.

Will you choose to come to Jesus day by day and learn from Him.

Will you let yourself be yoked to him and learn his ways that are gentle and humble of heart, for then you will find rest for your souls.

For Jesus’ way was made for us.

His yoke is not easy as in it’s no problem - but easy in that it is well fitted to us -

it is easy because we are yoked to him and in him we can do all things -

Like all relationships it takes time - it takes humility - it takes risk and trust - and it takes learning new ways day by day - like an apprenticeship that lasts a life time - but O the joy of His ways.

Prayer

Hear Jesus invitation to you; “Come to me all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and learn from me for I am gentle and humble and you will find rest for you souls.”

Jesus we come to you, may we take your yoke and learn your ways that lead to life abundant, rest for our souls, for your ways are well suited to us.

Amen.