

July 5, 2020

**“The Burdens We Bring”
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake**

*Scripture Reading:
Matthew 11: 16-17, 28-30*

[Jesus said:] "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,

*'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.'*

"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."

This is the fourth time in my life that I have begun a new ministry in a church. You begin to know people a little bit better the longer you are around. Not just their persona and Sunday morning smile but you start to know “The Burdens they bear”

I am always amazed by this. You come to find out in this process that cheerful people you thought looked like they didn't have a care in the world, who went out of their way to make you feel welcome, or share a joke are actually carrying quite a load. A recent death, an ailing parent, family members who struggle, their own health issues. Layer by layer they let you see the beauty and burden of who they are.

I don't think people are being fake or in denial when they are cheerful, I think that it is partly because of what Jesus is getting at here. That part living a Christ centered life, being a part of a Christ centered community just makes all those burdens a whole lot easier to bear.

When I was growing up just about all of my older relatives had old barns that we loved to explore. Now this was in Oklahoma where they had survived the dust bowl and great depression, consequently, they did not throw much out. They all had old yokes hanging on the rafters left over from the olden days before they had tractors. Some of them were single yokes but a lot of them were doubled yokes. It's the double yokes that I picture when I read this passage, That when we put on that yoke with God, God helps us to bear the load and that the yoke actually causes us to walk in step with Christ.

If I am really stressed and worried about the state of the world and I read this I feel like weeping from the relief of it. Like I had been trying to take all the burdens of the world on my shoulders and I don't have to-- I can give it back to God and rest, just rest and start again tomorrow remembering that I am not shouldering my burdens alone.

It also brings to mind the times when our son would bury his head on my shoulder when a bad storm would come through. He would cry and then just relax, fall asleep, knowing he was loved and safe. And rest...

A lot of the scholars believe that Jesus is talking in comparison about the heavy burden that the Pharisees were putting on the people with their many laws. But that Jesus's yoke was light because it is the yoke of loving kindness. The yoke of the only Law that matters, the law of Love.

When we think about the text this way it can help us to unburden ourselves not just of our real burdens but also of our imagined, made up and artificial burdens.

The burden of greed, letting go of that feeling that we don't have enough that we need more to be happy.

The burden of being unforgiving or unforgiven, the burden of keeping up appearances, or keeping up with our neighbors instead of just loving them. The burden of our vanity, feeling too overweight, too old, on and on.

The burden of jealousy or insecurity. The burden of propriety, that we have to do something just right, the proper way, The burden of perfectionism, the burden of prejudice, the burden of hate or resentment or the burden of having to know it all, or the burden of having to be right all the time.

We can lay all of that down and just rest.

Let's take a minute, close your eyes. Bring to mind the burdens you carry this morning, the real and the imagined and picture yourself just handing them over to God, however you imagine God. What grief do you carry. What Pain? What worries do you have about your health, your family, your friends.

Let go in your spirit of the weariness that you carry, breathe deeply, what is making you weary? Give it over, let down your guard, soften your heart and just rest... Now listen again

"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."