

Sermon July 9-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

16 “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 17 ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon¹⁹;’ the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

25 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; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 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. 28 “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

SERMON

Clearly Jesus isn't offering the quick fix and life on easy street. Worries about life weigh us down; as burdens do. We worry about our families—health of spouse or the state of the planet grandchildren are inheriting. —it is burden-some to hear about dead fish washing up on shores in Texas and corpses of seals, dolphins and sea lions washing ashore in California because overheated oceans kill off food supplies that fish and other marine life depend on. We might dread the kind of life our children and grandchildren will have.

Societies and churches stagger under the burden of divisiveness; fracturing along political and cultural lines. Would be authoritarian leaders spew blame and spout empty promises they alone can fix the mess we're in.

We might have something in common with the people Jesus is talking to in the Gospel reading today.

Jesus comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable as the old saying goes. I've yet to find anywhere in the Bible where Jesus chastises individuals or crowds. He doesn't denounce Judaism—that's his faith! His momma's faith! Jesus opens fire on some elites who place extra burdens on people—think conquering empire. Think a few religious authorities who collude with the empire. Sounds like Pharaoh's Egypt all over again! The big deals live it up thanks to labour of the enslaved.

God hears cries of the oppressed and sets to liberating them by calling Moses.

Prophets like Amos excoriate the fat cats for a scheme of rent capitalism that made the rich richer imposing heavy burdensome debt that cost working people their homes and small farms. There's nothing new under the sun as anybody paying hundreds of percent interest to Pay Day Loans will tell you.

So, Jesus comes by his prophetic indignation honestly. He sees that those who reject his message do so because it's bad for their "business" or threatens their scheme to hijack religion for their own use.

Fascinating as this particular kerfuffle with the elites is, remember what's at stake! Jesus brings what he calls God's realm of liberating and restoring into the world. Earlier, Jesus tells his followers even a cup of cold water shared in his name is a mark of the reign of God.

Burdened as the world is, people of faith live in hope—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. says we live in hope that the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice. It's painful how slowly the arc bends. We feel the Good Friday dread and despair that it looks like the empire's brute force wins. Nevertheless! The faithful women's tremulous witness Easter Sunday declares that God's love ultimately wins out.

The easy yoke and light burden Jesus offers in an overburdened world is that God's not done. And Jesus is with us always even to the end of time.