

July 5, 2020

West Asheville Presbyterian

Psalm 145:8-14

8 The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. 9 The LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that the LORD has made.

10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your faithful shall bless you. 11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power, 12 to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds. 14 The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.

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 demon'; 19 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."

Three Sermons???

As I considered this week's scripture choices, I quickly was drawn to the Matthew text. I also saw that there at least three sermons nestled in the that group of texts. Rather than have the traditional 3 point sermon on a few passages, I will offer reflections on all three segments of this larger passage.

#1

What is wrong with this generation?

I know many of us can echo this statement. Everyday we hear another example of the many ways 'THIS generation doesn't get IT. Everyday we wonder "What has happened to Traditional Values? What has happened the work ethic? What has happened to valuing employees as an Important asset in a company? Today employees are fodder for the grist mill of the wealthy, filling their treasure stores to overflowing. You should also know that our view of society, this generation, today's values, is a view shared by all the generations that preceded us. **Tomorrow** can be a troubling time for everyone.

That is NOT what this text is about. This text is about something that is so much more. Matthew say, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and **they** say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' **THEY** being the ones who don't believe or expect the real Messiah. The Messiah, the Lord, the Christ came to bring justice and peace to all, knowing that Justice and Peace don't exist in a world focused on profit taking, wealth at the cost of EVERYTHING!!!

Justice means all of equal value. We will not need to remind the White world that Black Lives do matter. Justice means all lives will matter. Justice means all have equal opportunities, Justice means..... Well, you know what it means. Peace is also much more than no combat, no strife, no fighting for justice, no... The wonder of God's love, the death of Jesus, the presence of the Holy Spirit, means we have a life where we are redeemed of all and our cost is to show love, peace and justice to all peoples for **they** are the presence of God in this world **wherever** we go

#2

The revelation of the Father and the Son!!!

Where is the Spirit? Oh wait, that isn't the point here.

Actually, until Jesus promises an Advocate to walk with all of us through life, the people of Matthew's time didn't associate the Spirit they had felt and known with the Oneness of God and the Son. I think today's Christians read scripture as if the beginning and end of the story exist in a single point of time.

The history of God's people and their journey INTO knowing God is an ever revealing and **reforming** act. God is not done revealing God's own self, nor is God done re-creating us or the earth.

Trusting that God is guiding us, sustaining us, Using us, changing us is a difficult, but comforting idea. Jesus is telling the people of Israel, and today, that HE is AT ONE with the God they have known all their lives. It is this claim that HE and God are ONE which lead to His trial and death.

Beside the fact that Jesus was challenging the authority of Temple leaders and their corruption, the idea that God was among them in the flesh didn't fit with their idea of a God on a distant mountain. The claim also challenged their financial gain since they claimed to have SOLE access to God and their income sources were dependent on that idea. Never stand between men of greed and their money.

Jesus is making a bigger point here. BECAUSE he is at One with God means that if you want to know God in God's fullness, then you must draw near to Jesus. He is here. Know him and you will know God. The difference between

Jesus and the temple authorities is that Jesus offers knowledge of God without the fees of the temple. God is available to YOU by simply believing and obeying God's Commandments. The love of God is free to all by believing.

#3

I will give you REST.

Matthew's text is a widely known and loved one. I think it is read at every funeral led by a Christian leader. It is a text that offers much comfort to the suffering. It offers hope to the one suffering over the loss of a loved one. It offers hope and comfort to anyone facing the struggles of life, and all of us have those moments. It comforts those facing their own death.

Hear it again, 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."

One of the odd realities of this text is that it doesn't promise NO burden. It doesn't promise no toiling. Jesus simply says 'I will give you rest.'

**What does rest mean to you?**

The absence of work? Doing something you enjoy? Maybe a pursue you wanted to follow but it wouldn't pay the bills? A stay-cation? A work that does fulfill you, like puttering around your home?

**None of that is what Jesus is describing.**

Instead he says, "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.**"

Jesus has a new direction for your life, a new goal, a new purpose. He offers a NEW yoke and that is to learn from him. Learn to be the community God desired from Creation. The community that the Ten Commandments is intended to create. A community of and for all. A community that cares for all.

A community that seeks peace from within and shares that peace with all. A community that follows Jesus and God on the journey designed for us.

“30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Jesus’ yoke is not like the ‘yokes’ of our secular lives. For the non-farmers among us a yoke is designed to have all animals pull and work together. It is a yoke that controls the animals. It is a yoke that is not easy, Jesus promises that his yoke will be easy. It will be easy and we will NOT be expected to pull burdens that are backbreaking. Our burden is to carry the message of God into the world.

Our burden will be to follow Jesus into the world, eating and communing with sinners and Pharisees. We are to offer forgiveness and the Good News of the coming of Jesus as proof of God’s love.

The last line from our Psalm echoes Jesus’ words. “The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.” The Lord is our comfort. He gives us rest. NOW and FOREVER. AMEN.