

Text: Matt. 11:25–30

Theme: A Light Yoke

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation this morning is the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew chapter eleven, verses twenty-five through thirty.

In our text for today, Jesus says, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” What does this mean? How can a yoke be easy and light? Yokes are hard both on animals and on humans to make hard field work easier or more efficient. For those who do not know what they are, a yoke is a wooden bar or frame with smaller bars or rope loops that fit over the necks of two oxen or other draft animals. A single wooden shaft was attached to the yoke and extended back to the plow or cart. Thus the yoke embraces two parties to unite them and hold them in position to perform labor. To be yoked is to be joined or linked together in order to work productively in harmony. They have been used for thousands of years, still down to this very day by people like the Amish. Since carpenters constructed the various sizes and styles of yokes, it is likely that Jesus was intimately familiar with their design, and perhaps had even fashioned many himself in Joseph’s shop.

Yokes by their very nature are hard and weigh down whatever is being yoked together, whether that be animals or humans. What are you weighted down by? What tasks and burdens lay heavy upon your heart and body?

We are weighted down by the busyness of the world. Just think of everything that you have to do today before the sun sets. Mow the grass, do the dishes, clean your room, take out the trash, do your work to make your boss happy, and much more. We run here and there trying to get everything done, and how much is still left undone? Quite a lot, our bodies eventually get worn out. We get tired and need to rest and rejuvenate ourselves in order to get back up and do it all over again the next day.

We are weighted down especially by our many great and grievous sins. When we think that we can pull ourselves up to God. When we think that we can be perfect on our own, can we? No, we sin. We lie, we cheat, steal, commit adultery, we put other people and things in the place of God, we despise our neighbor and covet his possessions rather than loving him and helping him keep and increase them, and many more. We have laid upon us the oppressive weight of the Law which states “You must be perfect.” Accusing us with all of the times that we have failed and not lived up to the standard of God. Weighted down and burdened under this heavy load, how can we ever find rest and peace enough to be rejuvenated and restored?

Our Lord says, “I have borne the weight on your behalf.” The heavy yoke of our duties, our sins, and our burdens, Jesus takes upon Himself. What is too heavy for us to do, Jesus does for us on our behalf. Taking our burdens, He carries them to the Cross, bearing them and the punishment for them, for us in His holy Flesh. Dying on the Cross and rising again from the dead, Jesus takes our heavy yoke and in its place gives us the light and easy yoke of the Kingdom. Through faith, we receive the blessings of Jesus’ perfect life, sacrificial death, and resurrection. Jesus alone, abandoned by his disciples and forsaken even by his Father, bore the load of sin for the whole world while on the cross. Only Christ, fully God, could pull this load, and only he, fully

man, could bear it on our behalf. He carried that entire awful weight, that none of it might rest on our shoulders.

This great and wonderful news of what God has done for us is not only for you and me, but for the entirety of the world. Jesus says, “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden.” All those who are weary and burdened find rest in Jesus Christ through the faith that trusts in His grace. This great news we share throughout the world, in order that they may be bound with us in faith.

That is one other thing that a yoke does. It binds two animals or humans together for a joint task. In this case, we are yoked together with Jesus Christ, He who has borne our sins for us on the Cross. We are bound in an intimate relationship with one another. We are committed to Him because He was first committed to us. He paid for all our sins and set us free. Jesus fights all our battles for us. He equips us with His mighty power, the full armor of God. He provides our escape from temptation so we can stand. Jesus – our relief, our rescue, and our rest at every turn. He has broken our the yoke of slavery to sin, death, and the power of the devil, and removed its burden on the Cross. He daily lifts us up and carries us on eagles’ wings.

So where do we turn to for our rest? We turn to our Lord, to Jesus Christ, who has borne the weight of the Law and removed from our shoulders the curse of sin. We find rest in him and his gift of salvation, which is not heavy, but instead buoys us up. It means we need not despair in our struggle with the burdens of life. Rather, yoked to Christ, we pull only that share of the burden for which he has given us ample strength. By his grace, we are able to bear it. It means that he will never ask us to pull more than he has empowered us to handle. It means when the going gets tough, Christ will carry on for us because his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in  
Christ Jesus. Amen.