

The Yoke of Jesus
Matthew 11:25-30

I don't know about you, but I need to hear this passage today. Cleaning up after Hurricane Idalia, getting ready for presbytery and travelling to Houston to run the meeting, not to mention a trip to South Georgia and back – it's all been a bit much. But we've all been through similar things, haven't we? Wrestling with sickness and grief, caring for family members, trying to manage difficult relationships – who among us isn't weary or heavy laden in some way? Who among us doesn't long to hear these welcoming words of Jesus: "Come unto me and I will give you rest?"

That's one of the things we celebrate when we come to the Lord's Table this morning. For although we know Jesus wanted us to remember Him when we take the bread and wine, this is not simply a memorial meal. And as we come to the table, we are not simply asking that God the Father remember the sacrifice that Jesus offered up, giving His body and blood to pay the price for all the sins of all His people for all time.

Of course it is good for us and for the Father to remember what Jesus has done. After all, in today's passage Jesus calls Himself meek and lowly. He is indeed the Lamb of God Who has taken away the sins of the world by dying so that sinners like us might live.

But when we come to the table, we should expect more than mere remembrance. We should instead seek communion, a spiritual experience of oneness with Christ.

No, the bread and wine don't physically become the body and blood of Christ. But we do believe that Christ is spiritually present here. We understand that in a spiritual sense, what Jesus said is true: "This is my body given for you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood." The good news is that Jesus is really here, and those who profess faith in Him draw assurance from this sacrament that we are truly one with Him, that Jesus is as much within us in the Person of the Holy Spirit as this bread and this fruit of the vine go inside of us.

But what exactly does it mean to be connected to Jesus? What does it mean to come to Jesus? In today's passage, Jesus speaks of taking His yoke upon ourselves. Now, His disciples would have instantly understood this image: Jews commonly used the image of a yoke to express their responsibility to keep all the Law of Moses. Jesus' disciples thus likely believed that they had already taken on Jesus' yoke when they agreed to follow Him and to learn from Him. A yoke is an image of subjection and obedience.

And coming to Jesus, following Jesus, becoming one with Jesus still carries this meaning, this idea of learning from Him and of conforming our understanding of ourselves and of the world around us to His idea of truth. After all, in verse 27, Jesus makes it quite clear that the only way anyone can know anything about God the Father is by learning it from God the Son.

And so those of us who come to Jesus, those of us who take on His yoke must never fall into the trap of believing that the truth is relative. We must never decide for ourselves what is right and wrong based on our own reason or experience. We must not decide what we believe about God and then try to impose our understanding of truth on the text of Scripture or on the world around us.

No, verse 25 tells us that it's not those who are wise and prudent according to the world's standards who receive the truth. It's those who come to Jesus the way we all come to this table: not to give, but to receive, to accept the truth Jesus speaks to us the way we accept this bread and wine, the way that little children believe what mommy and daddy says. It is those who take the yoke of subjection and obedience to Christ upon ourselves, it is those who learn of Him who can expect to find rest for our souls.

And so before we come to this table, we need to ask ourselves this question: do we really want to take on Jesus' yoke? Do we really want to learn from Jesus? If so, how do we express that desire, how do we live out that desire in our everyday lives? How often and how earnestly do we seek His face in prayer? How regularly and how

diligently do we seek His will in the Scriptures? How carefully do we seek His guidance when we have important decisions to make? If we aren't even listening to Jesus, how can we say that we are learning of Him? And how can we expect to find the rest we crave?

But what is that truth that Jesus tells us? That His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The good news is that we don't have to keep all the Laws of Moses in order to be saved, for Jesus has already kept the Law perfectly on our behalf. The good news is that we don't have to pay the death penalty that all our sins deserve, for Jesus has already shed His blood, the blood of the covenant, for us. The good news is that it doesn't matter how hard we try or how good our intentions may be. The good news is that sinners are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It is that good news that we find most clearly expressed in the cross of Christ and that we experience in a personal, spiritual way as we come to the table.

So, come to the table, all you who are weary and heavy laden. Come to the table, all who seek to learn of Christ in humility. Come to Jesus and find rest unto your souls.