

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Jesus challenges the sophisticated to understand like children and offers hope to those who are oppressed.

Jesus said, 16 'But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places 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.'

Background to today's scripture – John in prison wondering if he had got it all wrong about Jesus.

People wondering too- lots of John's disciples wondering why Jesus was so different and if they could be on the same path to God.

John fasted/ lived in a desert most of the time and generally called people to repentance – never a popular message

Jesus came and often partied – 1st time he does a miracle he's at a wedding and turn water into wine. He dined with the elite and those who had nothing, and he performed miracles of healing regularly, often for those who the religious people didn't think deserved it.

So, what is going on in this passage that God may be wanting to speak to us about today.

1. Diversity – Team morning. We are a ministry team which is remarkably diverse. On paper you wouldn't think it would work but it does most of the time because we have good relationships. We, I suspect would all say we have had to work hard on it, and I am incredibly grateful for the gift of grace and love in the team. Julie's legacy for me will always be that she

allowed us to make mistakes and forgave and was abounding in grace. Therefore, we can celebrate each other's contribution to the team without being threatened by each other or going into comparison. That is a great strength.

Jesus wasn't threatened by anyone – like children who come to play together that is a picture of the Christian church – we all get to join in. We all have gifts – God is no respecter of person. The criteria for joining in is simple-Love Jesus and allow him to shape you and form you so that you can share his love with others. It like many things sounds simple and it should be

Are we overcomplicating it I wonder?

Why does it not always happen naturally? Well maybe it's because when God sends us someone who he wants to teach us something about him through that person may not always look like what we imagine. I went to what a lot of people describe as quite a trendy college with a lot of young ordinands. The majority were in there 20's early 30's. They were all very cool. I was very uncool; however, I believe God used us all to teach each other something about him, often through our differences

One of the blessings that is happening in lockdown is that if you so desire you could church surf! I don't think that's

always a bad thing although I'm hoping the lovely congregation of finch turns up on the first Sunday, we open the church doors.

It may even be that for the first time you may have seen how the ministry team preach/ lead differently. Again, we decided early on that rather than try and be too prescriptive we would allow each of us to do the services in a way that felt more natural. Afterall it's hard enough suddenly having to see yourself on tv but to see ourselves trying to be each other on TV would be ridiculous.

David wasn't ever meant to wear Saul's armour, and while its important we tried to make the content especially the 11am service as close as possible to what people are used to there is always room for a little diversity to help us grow deeper in our relationship with God.

I do wonder if those who have only experienced one kind of worship service or have had the same vicar for donkeys' years have allowed God to stretch and challenge them as much as they would if they had been willing to try something new or different now and then?

If we are not prepared to be stretched and challenged spiritually, there's a possibility that we may never go deeper with God, and we may never experience the full measure of what God has for us. Rarely does one person

or church have everything we need to understand how wonderful and amazing is God, and in certain seasons of our lives we may need to ask God to show us who we need to learn from or where we may need to go to find our more of who he has created us to be. That's **not a reason to church hop** but it may be a reason to go on a retreat, find a spiritual director or begin a bible study course.

Sometimes we may even need to make bigger changes in our lives like what we are going through now. No one likes to change some are better at embracing it than others, but no one genuinely likes it.

In this place we are now residing change is almost certainly on the cards – life will never be the same again and things that we thought were irreplaceable we have suddenly found we can do without. How wonderful to be in a place where everyone is pretty much experiencing this together in every corner of the world, wonderful and terrifying in equal measures.

This season in our lives will I suspect have taught us many things and I want to briefly touch on the final scripture which is a famous one which goes like this in the message bible version.

28-30 "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. (msg)

" How exhausted do you feel at the minute?

4 different kinds of exhaustion I feel – maybe more?

1. Labourers- heavy workload
2. Mental work – screen / number crunching/ office work
3. Emotional – even though many people are not working the hours they may have been doing, they are exhausted- why many reasons- grief / of losing jobs/ lifestyle/ relationships – zoom helps but not the same.
4. Spiritual exhaustion –foundations not in place. House built on sand.

Jesus says come to me and I'll show you how to do it.

Jesus Toolbox:

1. **Rest** – I will give you rest – story of Elijah – (1 Kings 17: 5-6) Mountain top experience – worn out – depressed – anxious - ravens fed him, breakfast and super and abundance of fresh water from the brook – its alright to rest- Sleep is so so important and many

are struggling with sleep at present for obvious reasons.

Holidays too are so so important as many of us will have found out as many have been cancelled. Or even just day trips out – to be refreshed and forget about life issues.

Are you needing to do something that will feed your soul and make you feel rested at the minute? Do you need to make a nice meal for yourself or maybe you could invite someone over to share a meal with you? Do you need to give yourself longer to prepare for bed – long soak just to relax and unwind? We forget sometimes the basics.

2. **2nd Tool - Prayer** – Jesus took himself to a place of solitude regularly to be with his father. I know when I need my quiet days. Once a month I tend to disappear for the day, no agenda, just a bible and notebook and I sit and listen, pray, and rest, even sometimes fall asleep! Rest is key to physical, emotional and spiritual renewal.

Even in the middle of this short exert of scripture Jesus launches into talking to his father. Prayer is totally underestimated – we try and sort issues out ourselves or begin projects then pray. We try and do things in

our own strength and then ask God to bless it and wonder why things go wrong.

Nothing should be more important than prayer for a Christian. Pete Greigs book Prayer a simple guide

<https://www.eden.co.uk/shop/search.php?q=Pete+Greig+book+How+to+Pray+A+Simple+Guide+for+Normal+People.>

If we don't put prayer first in our church what difference are, we too any other organisation? Prayer is more than just bringing our shopping list to God it's about listening to his answer.

What do you need answer to today and could you spend some time just sitting listening this week to God? *Hearing God – Dallas Willard*

<https://www.eden.co.uk/shop/hearing-god-4034588.html>

- 3. 3rd Tool – Scripture** – Jesus shows us who he is and who we are in the scriptures. They feed us and bring nourishment and strength to our weary spiritual souls. Meditation on God's word and who he is and who we are will bring us rest and peace. Soaking prayer – Listening to scripture being sung over us, again no agenda.

In the desert when Jesus was at his weakest and the enemy came to him with the temptations Jesus answered him with the word of God.

Abide / Lectio 365

4. 4th Tool Trust

This is not as much a tool but an attitude, but I think this helps us to move from weariness to restfulness.

Trusting that God is in control that he is there working behind the scenes and working for our good.

I started talking about team and I don't want you to think that the tools I have shared mean that we can just go and eat drink pray and be merry without taking seriously the terminology Jesus is using when he refers to the yoke. The yoke was a bar that fitted across 2 Oxen which made the ploughing of the field easier.

If we stay connected to Jesus, we will be able to fulfil the mission he has for us. To plough the ground, he gives us to plough for the sowing of seeds in his kingdom. If we don't stay connected to Jesus whatever we feel called to it will become a burden and feel exhausting. If we refuse to

learn from each other and try our best to work together with those he has called us to share the load with we may struggle to get the mission fulfilled.

I do believe that means for some of you listening today that God would be saying to you Rest – what does your soul need – we are mind body and soul. We need several things to stay functioning – it will be different for all of us. My husband runs, I tend to just sit in the garden or by water. What do you need?

Do you need to learn more about prayer or maybe join with a friend and start praying together?

Or maybe its about letting go of the independence and trusting God with something?

Hopefully whatever it is you will take measure to put in place so that as you go on ploughing your field you can feel well rested and nourished by God and look back on the fruit your field has grown as you have allowed God to water and nourish you and those he entrusts into your care.

Prayer

Father God we bring you our heaviness and weariness and we ask you to teach us your ways, show us what we need to learn from you this week. Help us to know the tools and people you have around us to help us in the

season and may we know a lightness in our spirit as we trust you in this season.

In Jesus name

Amen