

## **In Nomine Iesu**

### **Second Last Sunday after Trinity 2023 The Yoke of Christ lightens the burden you are carrying – Matthew 11:25-30**

“At that time Jesus declared, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 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. 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.’”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who came to give us peace and rest. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

You park your car in the parking lot, farther away from your intended destination than you want to be and walk past a car in a handicapped parking space up to the sidewalk. There you see a man, waving a red and white rod back and forth before him as he walks. Entering the grocery store you see a woman, a small pack at her side with plastic tubing coming out of it leading to her nose. As you proceed down an aisle you notice a man looking at a package as a service dog stands silently beside him,

alert to any heightened anxiety in his master as people press around. You have experienced these sights. You know what complicates the life of these people. But you don't use a wheelchair to go into the grocery store. You don't know what it is to walk in public unable to see. You don't know the struggle to breathe without supplemental oxygen. You don't know anxiety even panic as unfamiliar people mill closely about you. You don't know because you walk with little or no difficulty; you see what is ahead of you; you breathe freely; you do not fear a crowd of strangers because you have not experienced the sheer terror of war in an unfamiliar and dangerous place. You don't know. Nor do I. There are, however, some among us who do know these things from experience.

## I

But you do know, or at least have known sometime in your life, the emptiness of loss. You do know the fear that some particular hidden sin of yours will become known. You do know the heat of shame as your face reddens at its discovery. You do know the anxiety of constantly being unsure of how you will pay the next set of necessary bills. You do know the awful loneliness of rejection. You do know the sting of failure. You do know the heavy burden of guilt unforgiven. You do know the ache of regret.

Or perhaps you are among the wise and understanding of the world, who haven't ever experienced any of these. You have gone from success to success, never looking back with regret or guilt. If so, you are what the world would call one of the lucky ones, one of the ones people look to with curiosity and envy. And you are aware of it, and take pleasure in their envy. You are fulfilled by the

admiration, even praise of those who have not fared as well as you have in life. Because that is so, Jesus' words, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," have no real meaning for you.

Consider the contrast Jesus places before us here: First, the wise and understanding and second, little children. Wait, you might say, aren't wisdom and understanding to be desired? Do we not pray for such things? Are these virtues not praised in the Scriptures? Yes, that is true. But do not forget to take in all that Jesus says. Let us listen to Him again.

"I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 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."

Solomon asked God for wisdom; and it was granted to him. However, as time went on he forgot where wisdom came from. He forgot the One from whom he'd asked for wisdom. He even tried to use the wisdom he possessed apart from trust in the God from whom he'd received it. And in doing so, he became a fool. Yes, he was still seen by many as one of the lucky ones. He had everything. But in reality, all that he had would be lost to him, for he had left the Father, the Giver of all good things, the Father, who so loved the world.

## II

Jesus said, “No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Then He added, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” To those who hear the voice of Christ, who desire His rest, He reveals the Father, who so loved the world that He gave His only Son. And the Son turns them from the wisdom and understanding of the world to children who look to their Father for wisdom and understanding, as Solomon once looked to God. He says to them, “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 a Christian look like to the unbelieving world? He or she looks like a person who walks under the yoke of the church, having to get up Sunday morning. Having to go to church to do ... what? Sing songs no one I know has heard of, stand up and sit down and then stand up again, why? Listen to an oddly dressed man drone on and on about, well, what? And he says to himself, “who wants that when I could be sleeping, doing nothing or enjoying a day that I don’t have to work. A Christian seems to forego many things I enjoy. He follows rules no one I know takes seriously anymore. She is nice to everyone, even to those who aren’t nice to her. I don’t get it. I don’t want to carry that kind of burden. I’ve got enough already.

Dear friends, if that really were Christianity, I too might think the same.

But that isn’t Christianity. Christ our Lord 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.”

The Christian walks through life uplifted by the yoke not of the church, but the yoke of Christ. He gets up Sunday morning not because he has to, but because he wants to. He gets up to hear the wondrous news that Christ has taken away his sin and therefore the heavy burden of guilt has been taken from Him and replaced with Christ, who says, “I will give you rest.” She too goes to church not because she has to, but because she wants to. There she sings not songs, but hymns, many of which have been sung for centuries, because they lighten the burden of her sorrows and disappointments and replace them with joy and real hope. Christians stand at church – rise - because they are in the presence of their gracious Lord to hear His cleansing, forgiving, and welcoming word, then sit to hear how it applies to them, personally, and then they rise yet again to give thanks to Him who once and for all paid for all their sins. And they kneel before Him to receive the guarantee that He has paid for all their sins with His body and His blood. This is the yoke that Christians don’t struggle to drag their past behind them in life, but which truly carries them forward through life to life everlasting. This is the burden that they do not bear, but the burden which lifts them up and bears them onward to heaven.

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Just as someone who walks without difficulty does not know the plight of one who cannot; the one who sees clearly does not understand the life of one who cannot; the one who breathes easily does not grasp the struggles

of the one who cannot; and the one who has never seen the horror of combat cannot grasp the visions of past danger that haunt the memory of those who have; so also the one who walks through life yoked to his or her past with all its fears and failures, burdened with guilt of wrongs done to others, cannot grasp what it means to be wear the yoke of Christ, to bear His light and easy burden, and so, to have the rest He gives.

But, dear struggling, weary, and burdened friend, Christ includes you too when He says, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ... my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Hear Him. Believe Him, and you too will come to know. Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**