



46A BIBLE STUDY - PENTECOST-5A

Learn from me

Abstract

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
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.”

Matthew 11:28–30

Jim de Jong
jim@dejongs.id.au

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SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2020 | PENTECOST 5A | PROPER 9 | YEAR A

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Genesis 24:34–38, 42–49, 58–67

Psalm Psalm 45:10–17 or Song of Solomon 2:8–13

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Zechariah 9:9–12

Psalm Psalm 145:8–14

New Testament Romans 7:15–25a

Gospel Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

Matthew 11.16-19,25-30

Jesus notes that both he and John the Baptist failed to meet people's expectations. Jesus thanks God that the point of his ministry has been revealed to the simple rather than the wise and calls on people to learn how to live from him.

This week's resources explore: how God's wisdom, revealed in Jesus, confounds expectations.

Welcome and opening prayer

Jesus says: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.

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.'

Let us come to the Lord Jesus.

Let us come to seek his rest.

Let us pray

We are here today, Lord, to worship you.

As we bow our heads before you,

we want to be amazed by your wisdom,

bowled over by your love,

and completely lost in you.

Lord, open our hearts to receive you,

in ways beyond whatever we could ever ask

or even think.

Amen.

Introduction

There are surprises in our readings for today. Amid foreign occupation, Zechariah finds hope for a coming kingdom with a king who is humble, brings peace and sets prisoners free. Both John the

Baptist and Jesus confounded the expectations of Israel at that time. Today, Jesus praises his Father for the unexpected way in which the wisdom of God is revealed to the weak and powerless, rather than the mighty or learned through being yoked with Him helping us bear the load.

Readings

Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

¹⁶ “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

¹⁷ “We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
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, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

²⁷ “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, 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.”

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Dramatic version of the reading

We will need: a narrator, four ‘children’, Jesus.

Narrator: Some followers of John the Baptist came to see Jesus. They asked Jesus questions, and they watched him talk to the crowds about John. Then Jesus spoke to them about the crowd.

Jesus: What are these people like? I think they are like children who bicker about the games they are playing.

Child 1: Listen to my flute. I’m playing wedding music. Why aren’t you dancing?

Child 2: I don’t feel like dancing.

Child 3: All right then, we’ll play funerals instead. I’ll sing a sad song, and you can walk slowly and cry.

Child 4: But I don't feel like crying.

Jesus: People are never satisfied. They criticised John the Baptist for fasting and not drinking alcohol. And they criticise me because I enjoy supper and a drink with friends. But that totally misses the point. Look at what God is doing through me, through my words and actions – that's what matters: what God is doing!

Narrator: Another time, after Jesus had been talking to a crowd of people, including his own disciples, he stopped to pray to God, his Father. He said something like this:

Jesus: (*raising hands to heaven*) Thank you, Father, that you have shown things to those who love and trust like children. And that it doesn't matter if they are clever or not. You have given everything to me. No one really knows me like you do. And no one really knows you like I do. Except perhaps the people I choose – they can get to know me and you.

Jesus: (*to everyone around*) If you are weary and weighed down with burdens, come to me. Take time and make the space to be still and quiet with me. Share your burdens with me and learn from me, because I am gentle and kind, and my burden is light. I will not weigh you down. I will give you peace. And then your worries will seem light enough to carry too.

Exegesis Gospel: Matthew 11.16-19,25-30

These two Gospel portions are from the narrative following the teaching on mission. Jesus has just responded to the questions that John the Baptist sent by way of his disciples; John had been wondering if Jesus was the expected Messiah, and Jesus answers by listing the acts of power he has been doing (11.4-5). Jesus speaks to the crowd about John's role as a prophet and then continues, with the first passage here (vv.16-19), to compare the responses of 'this generation' of Israel to both John and Jesus himself. Neither of them had satisfied popular expectations. John's ascetic lifestyle had led to accusations that he had a demon, while Jesus' non-puritan habits of eating and drinking suggested he was self-indulgent (Proverbs 23.20), and his choice of social contacts was highly questionable! The people were difficult to please; neither Jesus nor John met their expectations. In a manner like his response to John's disciples, Jesus points to his deeds as evidence for his character (see the personified figure of God's Wisdom in Proverbs 8).

The second portion (vv.25-30) picks up the narrative where Jesus praises God for hiding the implications of his ministry from those who might be expected to understand things, and for revealing the importance of Jesus, and the appearance of the kingdom of heaven, to those who were not considered wise or sophisticated, namely infants. In that culture children were viewed as vulnerable, dependent and socially marginal; in other words, they were among the weakest and most insignificant in society. These were not those to whom one might think of sending an important message, such as the appearance of the kingdom of God. Verse 27 makes an important point concerning Christ; here, Jesus states clearly his place as a mediator between God and the people.

The last few verses use the metaphor of a yoke; this was a structure, usually made of wood, that could be worn over the neck and shoulders of animals or humans, and was used to make it easier to pull or carry heavy loads. It could be used as picture language for being oppressed (e.g. Isaiah 58.6) or linked to another (e.g. Numbers 25.3). However, some Jewish writings used it to speak of putting

oneself under instruction to God's instructions for life in the Torah (commonly translated 'Law') or God's wisdom; something similar would seem to be the meaning intended here, since Jesus speaks of people learning from him.

We can also see some possible echoes of the story of Moses. Moses was described as humble (Numbers 12.3); God knew him and promised him rest (Exodus 33.12-14). It has been suggested that throughout the Gospel, and not least in the presentation of Jesus as teacher of Israel, Matthew is presenting him as the second and greater Moses.

Picture pointers: 'What can we learn from this image?'



- What can we learn from this image?
- How might we help people who carry heavy burdens?
- What does 'my yoke is easy...my burden is light' mean to you?

Live your faith

Write a list of the wonderful things you see in a friend and then tell them what you listed

A sending out prayer

Jesus has called us to come to him
and blessed us with his richness.

Now he sends us out into his world,
to make sure people see him,
and listen to him, through us.

What a responsibility, what a joy, what a privilege.

We are yours, Lord. Use us as you will.

Amen.