



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

THE WEARY WORLD *Rejoices*

+Sermon by Bishop Jon Anderson **Chapel Service for Christmas and Epiphany**

Grace to you and peace, Children of God, weary and burdened.....invited to come into the gracious rest and love of Christ Jesus our Lord. Grace to you and peace.

On our family farm, when I was growing up, there was an old shed that was breaking down. Hanging in the shed, on the wall, was this very old thing fascinated me. Who knows how old it was? It was carved out of wood. It was big, long, and heavy. It had two loops made of a thinner wood and old, stiff, leather straps. The two openings were for two necks. The artifact from the past was a yoke for oxen. It always comes to mind when I read Matthew's words for today about yokes.

"Come to me." Remember that Matthew's Gospel lesson for today begins with an invitation.

"Come to me" in hard times and good.

I can hear Jesus calling to us like my grandpa would call the cows into the barn to feed them. In your weariness remember we have an inviting God and Lord we follow.

In today's lesson, **Jesus says, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens."** What are you weary from these days? Let's talk about your burdens.

My friend Charles, last night in a Zoom conversation, said "I don't know why I am so tired...." **Well!!!!** It might have something to do with our months of running in deep anxiety through this time of the virus. Plus, all the normal stuff of life continues to unfold. Plus, there has been all the turmoil in many of our families, congregations, communities, and country.

I do not know your story, but it has been hard. All of us adjusting, again and again, through the stages of the virus. Through these months we have been struggling with the burden of our fears and the fears of others. On top of all the trivial stuff, there are things we do not want to think about that are in our face, day after day, like fears of illness and fears of death.

People are tired and weary from storms of many kinds. Too many have had storms in our families, congregations, and communities. Our country continues to live through political storms. This year, with all its challenges and opportunities

has piled up burdens that left us exhausted. Some of us live with the burden of anxiety that never quits about our personal life or congregation. We are weary from the **anxiety** of constantly preparing for storms we fear we see on the horizon or hide over the horizon.

We all are carrying our own burdens and shared burdens. In all this great disruption our questions have grown more intense and in number. "Can I do this?" "I do not know how to do this." "Can I learn?" Like my daughter trying to work and support her son in school, many have been pulled multiple ways. Losses of many kinds weigh on us. Losses for our neighbors and friends weigh on us. We have lost treasured people from our families and communities. On bad days it seems like most of what was normal has changed. Treasured moments have been lost. We miss all kinds of simple things. We will not take for granted simple gathering with our extended family, friends and congregation in the remaining years of our life.

All the innovations and experiments have been exciting, but we need some rest in this season of light. I need some rest. How about you?

The one whose birth we celebrate came to speak to us.

"Come to me."

Our inviting God knows how it really is for you and me in a way that no one else knows.

Jesus knows all our broken-ness, hurt, fears and still asks us to come. Jesus knows about our need for rest. Jesus came to this troubled world to share God's promises.

Jesus promises us,

"I will give you rest."

The one whose birth we celebrate in our Christmas and Epiphany season came to bring us God's promises of rest and hope.

But when he says, "Take my yoke upon you," don't you want to push back? What do you mean "take my yoke upon you?" I have enough stuff weighing down my heart, mind, and shoulders. A part of me says, I do not even want a light yoke. I do not need one more thing. The questions come if we are honest, "Rest in serving?" "What? Rest in a yoke?"

Jesus will not give up on us. He is like our God who sent him. He is our rabbi and teacher. Jesus came not just to teach us facts and cognitive things. Jesus came to lie in a manger, walk as a child and learn from us. Not from on high, but at our side, Jesus invites us to take on his yoke and learn from him and with him. Christ is with us and calls us deeper in practicing our faith in this difficult season. Jesus reminds us of the gifts of prayer, reading scripture, serving, loving, forgiving and encouraging one another and our neighbors. Christ calls us to walk with him and gather in the community even though we cannot physically gather.

Jesus says.... **"For I am gentle and humble in heart."** Christ loves you...In his compassion, Christ has

.... Yoked himself to you in baptism....

... Yoked you to his work of throwing out demons, healing and forgiving

.... Yoked you to his suffering, his cross.....to his death and resurrection

.... Yoked you to his future.....

Yoked together, Christ Jesus is the strong one who has come to walk by your side.... and teach you how to live and love. He is the strong one who will pull you through the mud and carry you. He came as a fragile baby and works in surprising ways, like a cross, reaching out to surprising people who the world thought were of the wrong kind. You have been saved by his work.

Yoked to Jesus, you will learn from our gentle, powerful, suffering, dying and rising Lord. God always comes down to find us, to be yoked to us. God is not done training any of us. We celebrate the light he brings to our world. And siblings in Christ we also celebrate that Jesus our Lord has yoked us to one another.

Jesus promises, “You will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden light.” Live in lightness, hope, and joy. You can trust in him.

This is how Eugene Peterson Paraphrases the text in his The Message.....

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.”



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