

Worship at Home – 9 July 2023

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever you are sharing in this act of worship, you are welcome.

A poem by Edwina Gateley:

Be silent. Be still. Alone. Empty. Before your God.
Say nothing.
Ask nothing.
Be silent.
Be still.
Let your God look upon you.
That is all.
God knows.
God understands.
God loves you
With an enormous love,
And only wants
To look upon you
With that love.
Quiet.
Still.
Be.

Let your God
Love you.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 355

Jesus, lover of my soul,
let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll,
while the tempest still is high;
hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
till the storm of life is past;
safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last!

Other refuge have I none;
hangs my helpless soul on thee;
leave, ah! leave me not alone,
still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed,
all my help from thee I bring;
cover my defenceless head
with the shadow of thy wing.

Plenteous grace with thee is found,
grace to cover all my sin;
let the healing streams abound;
make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art;
freely let me take of thee;
spring thou up within my heart,
rise to all eternity.

Reading: Zechariah 9: 9 – 12

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the warhorse from Jerusalem;
and the battle-bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

¹² Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.

Reading: Matthew 11: 16 – 19 and 25 - 30

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."

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon"; ¹⁹the 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; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All 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. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Reflection

What's a yoke you might ask? A yoke is a large and heavy piece of agricultural plow equipment, used to harness two animals to a cart that they then pull. A yoke can also be used with a heavier piece on the larger, stronger animal, and a lighter portion harnessed to the new or younger animal being trained. The yoke was designed to better distribute the weight of the load and also to give mechanical capability to the work the animal was set to do. So, what is the yoke of Jesus? It is a place of rest where we will find humility and gentleness and learn his ways. We must first accept the yoke of Jesus' relationship to experience the easing he speaks of. The yoke of Jesus will provide us with the mechanical capability to do the work we have been called to – but we first must be attached to him – physically and spiritually. We may just be surprised with how light the yoke actually is, and how much easier we operate when connected with to Christ. What are you yoked to in your life right now? Jesus? The world? A person? Something else?

There are times the church feels like a yoke. It's hard work. We get stressed. We get tired. We are challenged by how we keep the church open. There are some who say "you can't do it like that" and put faith in a small box making it confined and narrow. I've had people in the past who've been made very unwell by the church. That cannot be right. Jesus in these verses has a swipe at the narrowness of the Pharisees and their pompous law abiding religiosity.

He says the heart of who God is has not been revealed to them but to infants, little ones, who aren't cluttered by life or yoked to tradition or to rules, but open to new ideas. They also aren't tempted to conform to the world being burdened by its issues. Anna in the classic Mister God this is Anna had it right:

"The whole business of adults going to church filled Anna with suspicion. The idea of collective worship went against her sense of private conversations with Mister God. As for going to church to meet Mister God, that was preposterous. After all, if Mister God wasn't everywhere, he wasn't anywhere. For her, churchgoing and "Mister God" talks had no necessary connection. For her, the whole thing was transparently simple. You went to church to get the message when you were very little. Once you had got it, you went out and did something about it. Keeping on going to church was because you hadn't got the message or didn't understand it or it was "just for swank."

Maybe today's lesson is how we find rest in church is to take on Jesus' yoke not the church yoke. The old covenant service wording had it right: "Beloved in Christ, let us

again claim for ourselves this covenant which God has made with his people, and take upon us the yoke of Christ. This means that we are content that he appoint us our place and work, and that he himself be our reward.” And making space to rest in Jesus might mean we see things differently. The Old Testament reading this week is from Zechariah. You might be saying “it’s not Palm Sunday!” But it’s saying to us this week Jesus is radical if we will only take time to see him. Only those who really saw got what he was up to in Jerusalem that day.

Jesus says “Come to me, take my yoke upon you, my burden is easy, come and find rest for your souls.” Well I’ll end with a reflection from the US Episcopal Church sermon site. This is the crux of it. Do we do stress and worry and get bogged down or can we find rest and joy?

“When we think we know what we’re doing according to the world’s view or even the church’s, God teaches us a new step in our dance. We are supposed to be different. We are supposed to be followers of Jesus Christ. After all, if we made God in our image like in Norse or Greek mythology, who would save us?

Who would draw us out to be the people God created us to be? Jesus says in our Gospel today, “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.” Boy, is that out of our comfort zone! The more we follow God’s ways, the more we know that we will be rejected by the acknowledged experts of the world—those that might see what we do as followers of Jesus as foolish.

We are called to a different standard. When we stop listening to those voices from without, we can finally hear the voice that comes from within. When we try to carry out our own salvation, we get weary, we feel burdened. That is when Jesus says to us, “Come to me... and I will give you rest.” This rest can come to us like a mindfulness exercise: pausing to be still and noticing five things with each of our senses—things that will ground us in the present moment with God. In doing so, we rest in God and who God created us to be instead of being taken over by the “devil” or our complexes. When we rest, we also give other people permission to rest and experience God fully. How would our world change if we focused on simply being with God and cultivating thanksgiving? Let’s find out.”

Hymn: Singing the Faith 495

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways!

Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love!

With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of Thy call,
As noiseless let Thy blessing fall
As fell Thy manna down.

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm.

Prayer:
When we've given all we have to give
Christ, You bid us rest
When our resources seem exhausted
Christ You bid us rest

You bid us rest
not so that we can simply regroup and replenish
You bid us rest in You
so that we can be reminded of Your love
and Your desire to hold us close

You bid us rest.
Until, resting in You,
we find healing and strength

that enable us once more
to be open and vulnerable

But first,
in You we rest.

Hymn: to tune Finlandia

We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender!
We go not forth alone against the foe;
Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender,
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go;
Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender,
We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.

Yes, in Thy name, O Captain of salvation!
In Thy dear name, all other names above;
Jesus our righteousness, our sure foundation,
Our Prince of glory and our King of love,
Jesus our righteousness, our sure foundation,
Our Prince of glory and our King of love.

We go in faith, our own great weakness feeling,
And needing more each day Thy grace to know;
Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing,
“We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go”;
Yet from our hearts a song of triumph pealing,
“We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go.”

We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender!
Thine is the battle, Thine shall be the praise;
When passing through the gates of pearly splendour,
Victors we rest with Thee through endless days;
When passing through the gates of pearly splendour,
Victors we rest with Thee through endless days.

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain
us for ever. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Christ. Amen.