

## YOKED FOR EQUALITY

7/5/20 ~ St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Encinitas, CA

Proper 9 (A): Song of Solomon 2:8-13; Romans 7:15-25a; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Doesn't that sound good? It's a holiday weekend, but it feels like all the other weekends we've had for the past three months...at home, with our very insular circle of family, or, if you're like me, on FaceTime with a friend.

And we've been carrying heavy burdens—working at home, keeping kids occupied, worrying about elderly parents and neighbors with no end in sight. At the same time, many of us are engaged in dismantling systemic racism in our country. This is a weary time in our lives, and the burdens feel heavy.

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” I want that relief, don't you? That message is so easy to relate to.

The same is true about the Apostle Paul's proclamation in our reading from Romans—it's easy to relate to also. He says: “For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” So, how many of you have been eating more than you know you should during our Stay at Home time? And how many of you aren't exercising as much as you know you should?

I know I'm not alone; I get up each day resolving to eat less and exercise more, but by noon I give into my cravings, and by evening, I've decided to plop myself in front of the TV instead of going for a walk, because I am weary and exhausted. Like Paul says, “I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.

Paul's message has a lot for us to consider, in terms of the sea of change we hope to bring about in our world. It's not just what any one of us individually does. Paul says, there is a force that's bigger than any one person. And that force is what he refers to as sin.

One theologian suggests that the way Paul views sin is a “distortion of relationship with God.” Applied to our current circumstances, when any of God's beloved—and that is the entire human race—when any of God's

beloved are left behind—not given the treatment they need, left out of the justice equation, etc.—that is sinful.

Paul's other point in the Romans passage is that we cannot eradicate sin by using our minds alone. He says, "if we could will it, we'd do it". Fortunately, just as sin is a power much bigger than us, so is God's grace bigger than us. We work along with God's grace to eradicate sin.

A few weeks ago, I listened to a Harvard professor talk about the Declaration of Independence and how it states that we were all created equal and have certain unalienable rights—rights that are inherently ours simply because we are human and deserve life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The professor pointed out that we are a nation of independence with a mentality of pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps, and, yet we are also a barn-raising society; in the early days, people helped their neighbors build barns and houses. But we haven't outgrown that.

When our neighbors need groceries, we go buy them. When our friends need meals after surgeries, we deliver them. When someone's kid needs a ride to school, we drive them. We help each other. We are independent individuals, but our civic duty is to help each other—no matter our political affiliation.

So, even though it feels comforting to read: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest," it's clear that Jesus doesn't stop there. He expands on that notion with: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me."

In that line: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me," we find our call to discipleship. We are yoked together with Jesus and the rest of humanity. In helping eradicate sin and ensuring no one is left out is where we find rest for our souls.

On this 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend, we give thanks for our civil liberties that allow us to live in a democracy. At the same time, as Christians, our higher authority in God calls us beyond our individual independence to the yokedness to which Jesus refers, understanding that in working together to ensure no one is left out of the social justice equation, is where our burden becomes light.

The founders of this country were guided by the wisdom that we are created equally. It's really simple, and, yet, there are those who want us to believe it's much more complicated than that. I think that's what Jesus was getting at when he said, "God has hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants." What he's saying is that those of us who think we're so smart that our hearts should not be involved in solving systemic problems, are wrong.

Jesus might have had us use the KISS principle...remember that saying? K-I-S-S...Keep It Simple, Stupid. The simple concept is that all human beings are created equal—all are created in God's image—therefore, everyone deserves the right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. And, then...when we proclaim that for all our siblings in Christ, standing yoked together with Jesus, then we "will [indeed] find rest for our souls".

-AMEN

### **Collect of the Day**

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

### **Song of Solomon 2:8-13**

The voice of my beloved!  
 Look, he comes,  
 leaping upon the mountains,  
 bounding over the hills.  
 My beloved is like a gazelle  
 or a young stag.  
 Look, there he stands  
 behind our wall,  
 gazing in at the windows,  
 looking through the lattice.  
 My beloved speaks and says to me:

"Arise, my love, my fair one,  
and come away;  
for now the winter is past,  
the rain is over and gone.  
The flowers appear on the earth;  
the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtledove  
is heard in our land.  
The fig tree puts forth its figs,  
and the vines are in blossom;  
they give forth fragrance.  
Arise, my love, my fair one,  
and come away."

### **Romans 7:15-25a**

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

### **Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

Jesus said to the crowd, "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; 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."

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; 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 you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”