

Thursday, March 4

Today's Reading: Matthew Chapter 11

Today's Devotional Message is by Pastor Don Moormann

"Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light." Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

This passage is filled with words that in the original Greek refer to large, multifaceted concepts. I'll pick out several that I hope will give you some of the richness of these words of Jesus. The first is "weary" which refers to soldier being battered, wounded and exhausted after a battle, a wrestler tired to the bone after a hard match, or a manual laborer so tired at the end of the day that he scarcely has the strength to drag himself home. It is a fatigue so deep you think you just can't take another step today and you dread even thinking about tomorrow's struggles. The second is "carry heavy burdens" which refers to a ship loaded down with so much cargo it's almost sinking. We might say, of ourselves, "I can hardly keep my head above water." Both refer to being stressed out, maxed out and without the energy to keep going in life. If any of these pictures connect with your life then Jesus has good news for you.

First he offers "rest." Years ago Coke had the advertising slogan, "The pause that refreshes." That's pretty much what this word means. First, take a step back from all that's beating you to exhaustion and pulling you so far down you can hardly breathe. Jesus offers you a place to catch your breath. But he offers more. He offers renewal, a place to refuel. It's kind of like recharging your phone when its battery is so low it no longer functions. It's a place to plug in to the limitless energy of God.

Jesus also offers you a "yoke". In the ancient world oxen, not horses, pulled heavy wagons. The only yokes available would choke a horse if it tried to pull a heavy load. Jesus offers you a change of yokes, from the choking yoke you've been struggling with to a yoke that will bear the burdens that are part of life in this broken world. But the word yoke appears again at the end of the passage. This time it's literally called an "excellent yoke", but there's another layer of meaning. The word "excellent" in Greek is also a proper name, the name that many Greek Christians gave to Jesus. "Christos" meaning "Messiah" didn't hold much meaning for Greeks but "Chrestos" meaning "excellent" was filled with meaning and so applied to Jesus. The yoke Christ gives may be interpreted as being Christ himself with all his forgiveness, grace, peace and power. With this yoke in place many of your other burdens melt away and you have the energy for a new life, one that is shaped by Christ; one that enables you to be Christ-like wherever you are. This yoke identifies you as his ambassador of Good News to a world that desperately needs peace for its struggles and strength for its burdens. Come to Christ. He takes away the junk that chokes you and gives you a purpose that lifts you.

Prayer: Lord I'm tired and weary and choking from trying to deal with life on my terms. Give me your yoke for I long to show you and your love to my world. Amen.