



July 9, 2023 Mt. 11: 16-19, 25-30. Gen 24:24-36
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ENTERING THE SCENE:

In our text today we find Jesus struggling with the frustration that comes from the realization that the people just aren't "getting it". In this drawing we find Jesus riding into town between to opposing understandings of God. In the verses between the two sections he is pointing out the consequences of what happens when people willfully ignore what is right before their eyes. He is challenging them and us to see the Father as he does. He is promising that when we do, we will find rest for our souls. He teaches that when we do the difficult/right things, proved by our combined actions, wisdom results. And that wisdom produces a humble gentleness (notice that Jesus is on a donkey) that helps bring to others this same peace. Today we hear again "To what can I compare this generation?" Have we become more able to see and respond to this question?

Mt. 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 flute 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 actions."

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 was your **good pleasure**. 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."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus teaches that when we see him, we see the Father. When people see us who call ourselves Christians, do they also get a glimpse of the Father?

PRAYER: Lord, you counted on our God given birthright that instilled a sense of right in me. Sometimes life damages my "truth detector" and I need help to fix it. You came to do just that. In every way possible, but word and deed you revealed God's will for me. Sometimes that requires my going against the "common sense" of the world. Help me to take to prayer as you did all those choices that tempt me to do the expedient thing and give me the heart to do the right thing in love. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

COMPARE: To compare something is to set one thing alongside another in order to explain something.
What is Jesus explaining in this example?

CHILDREN: Children are necessarily ignorant of many things. Because of that ignorance they can make demands that make little or no sense.

Have you ever found yourself in a childlike position when you pray? What happened?

CALLING OUT: Jesus uses the example of children who are calling out for something, but are never satisfied with what they are given, because they really haven't identified what the real issue is that needs attention.

What is the real issue in this example?

I PRAISE YOU: Jesus, in his prayer, knows exactly what he is about in direct contrast to the children above.

How does praising God help to transform you?

PLAYED / DANCE / SANG / MOURN: This contrast lifts the fact that no matter what Jesus or John the Baptist did, the response was the same – rejection.

When was the last time you in effect said: "Don't confuse me with the facts"?

JOHN / SON OF MAN: John preached repent and then you can be saved. Jesus preached you are saved, and this moved people to repent. To repent is to turn around and look at something in a new way.

Compare John's message with Jesus'. Which of these attracts you and why?

WISDOM/ WISE / LEARNED / LEARN: Those who pay attention to their experiences are those who learn and become wise.

What have you paid attention to in this teaching? What 'wisdom' have you gained from it?

PROVED: Jesus is confident that time will prove him right about God and God's will.

How does your faith help you develop this same sort of confidence?

FATHER / LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH: Jesus always directs himself and others to God.

What effect does this have on the people who are truly listening to Jesus?

HIDDEN: A thing is hidden when it is not out in plain sight.

What makes it so difficult to fool small children or pets? How does the 'learning' of the 'wise' hide the truth that Jesus reveals to the 'little ones'?

REVEAL: To reveal, is to remove that which hides something.

Does this text help you to see Jesus more clearly? If so, how?

COME TO ME: Jesus welcomes all those who were rejected by the 'wise and learned' of his day.

Who are the welcoming people of faith in your life now? What attracts you to them?

WEARY / BURDEN / BURDENED: The law that was given by Moses to free the people from the slavery of ignorance has now become so complicated and convoluted, that it itself becomes that which enslaves/ burdens.

Are there places in your faith life that have this feeling for you now? If so, what are they?

REST: Jesus will take the 613 laws and bring them back to their original simplicity. This gives the powerless rest from the burdensome and sometimes contradictory understanding of God's will current in that day.

Remember the last time you had to struggle with something that was so complicated or conflicting that whatever you did you seemed to fail. Does scripture study help you to find 'rest' as you search for God's will in your life?

YOKE: A yoke is a way to unite two sources of energy in order to make the task easier.

Is your prayer life a form of a yoke?

SOULS: The soul is the center of a person's being and becoming.

What helps you develop your soul?

GENTLE / HUMBLE: The arrogance of those who thought they knew the mind of God so well that they could judge/condemn others is compared with Jesus as gentle and humble.

Compare the last time you encountered arrogance with the last time you encountered gentleness. What feelings do you remember about those occasions? How did they affect your 'soul'?

EASY: Something is easy when it is uncomplicated and achievable without stress.
How does this text make Jesus' teaching 'easy'?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 11: 16 // Lk. 7: 31-5; Mt. 11: 18 // Lk. 1:15; Mt. 11: 19 // Mt. 9:10; Mt. 11: 25ff // Lk. 10:21f; 1 Cor. 26-9; Mt. 11: 27 // Jn. 3: 6, 46; 7: 28; Mt. 11:28-9 // Sir. 24:18; Eccclus. 51:23-7; Jer. 6:16;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Zech. 9: 9-10; Ps. 145: 1-2, 8-14; Rom. 8: 9,11-13; Mt. 11: 25-30;
Revised Common Lectionary: Gn. 24:34-8, 42-9, 58-67; Ps. 45: 10-17; Rom. 7: 15-25;
Mt. 11: 16-19, 25-30;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Perhaps the hardest requirement in the Christian battle is patience. Often it all seems too unspectacular and painfully slow. It is hard to wait in the face of so much human suffering and need. We want results and we want them now, but God's successes are always ahead of us in the future where we cannot always see them. The battle, then, is concerned with our "choosing God" in patience and in faith. As we have seen, to do this we need the fellowship of the Christian community and the accumulated wisdom of the Christian tradition. We shall also be armored against pessimism and negativity if we cultivate one simple virtue: delight in and gratitude for existence. The battle loses its deadly grimness if we learn the art of giving thanks. Without this sense of gratitude the discipline becomes burdensome and boring. St. Matthew's gospel insists on the lightness of the yoke. Pg. 22.

Jones, Alan. [Exploring Spiritual Direction](#). Boston. Cowley Pub. 1999.

Actually, the whole life of Christ is mystery, not just his Incarnation and Passover. His humanity itself is the primary sign of what divinity is. What is visible in his earthly life leads to the hidden, invisible mystery of his divine sonship and universal mission of salvation. Jesus himself during his public life told his followers: *Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you* (Mt 13: 11 and parallels). The granting of this revelation was a cause of great joy for him: *I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him* (Mt 11:25-27). Pg. 209

On the day of his Baptism, Jesus received an extremely important revelation about himself and about God; God reveals himself to him as a father reveals himself to his son, namely, fully, as Abba. It is not strange that he would later say: *All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son Except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.* (Mt. 11:27).Pg. 352.

Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S.O. [The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies](#). Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

Those who see prayer as something to paste onto one's life at points in the day or at the end of the week will not be able to withstand the pain for too long. Consequently, the compassionate road will be closed or kept barely open with charity slowed down to a trickle, and the price being exacted so high that personal bitterness, skepticism, and apathy result.

For those willing to pick up the burden through "prayerful availability" the possibilities can be different, the results transformed. The road will still remain dangerous and the spiritually glib will be buried beneath it. Yet, there will be one essential difference: on each curve, on each hill, during every straight area of the road, if we are alert, if we wait with a sense of expectancy – there will be God. To a faith-full person, everywhere is the Lord's home. Pgs. 68-9.

Wicks, Robert. [Availability: The Problem and the Gift](#). NY. Paulist Press. 1986.

When Moses becomes weary, leading his people through their trials in the desert, God tells him, *My presence will go with you, and I will give your rest*. Jesus tells his disciples, *Come to me all who toil and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. For Moses as for Jesus, rest is a precious ointment, a balm for their heavy heart. Jesus, for whom anything was possible, did not offer "seven secret coping strategies" to get work done faster, or "nine spiritual stress management techniques" to enhance our effectiveness. Instead, he offered the simple practice of rest as a natural, nourishing, and essential companion to our work. Learn from me, he invited, and you will find rest for your souls. Page 24.

Muller, Wayne. [Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest](#). NY. Bantam Books.1999.

One indication of the importance of a saying in the gospels can be found in how many other texts outside the official “canon” of scripture it can be found.

1. Mt. 11:25 is repeated in The Homilies of Clement (Book 8, 6:4), a third century document.
2. References to Mt. 11:27 can be found in Tertullian’s *Prescription of the Heretics*, chapter 21 (cira 200), and Origen’s *On First Principles* (cira 200) Chapter 3:4).
3. The Gospel of Thomas (early 2nd century) quotes Mt. 11:30 in Saying 90.
4. In the Qumran documents the Teacher of Righteousness said: “Teachers of lies have smothered thy people with lies, whereas Thou hast given me knowledge through thy marvelous mysteries”
5. *Gospel According to the Hebrews*: “He who wonders shall reign: and he who reigns shall rest.” (Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 1.9.45,5) and again in V.14.96,3.
6. *Osyrhynchus Papyrus 654, Logion 1*: Let not him who seeks cease until he finds; and when he finds he will wonder; and wondering, he will reign; and reigning, he will rest.

All too often the love of God is discussed as though it were an obligation imposed on us. We are obliged to love God. In fact, it is the other way around. God is the one who is obliged to love us because he has committed himself to that love. Ours is the privilege of accepting his invitation. Nor is this merely a metaphor or poetry. The universe is animated by love, and we are the target of that love, even if at times there are things that happen to us that don’t seem to be compatible with love. Page 27.

Greeley, Andrew. [Complaints Against God](#). Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1989.

The most noble of prayers is when he who prays is transformed inwardly into that before which he kneels.
Angelus Silesius

More detailed information on this section of Matthew can be found: Pages 253-261.

Carter, Warren. [Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations](#) Harrisburg, PA. Trinity Press International. 2001.

A good reflection on the issue of food can be found in chapter 2 (About Food) Pages 26ff.

Funk, Mary Margaret. [Thoughts Matter: The Practice of the Spiritual Life](#). NY. Continuum. 1000.

The early church struggled mightily, sometimes in deadly battles, when the understanding of Jesus as part of the Trinity was being developed. An example of this struggle exists in Arius’ “The Banquet” when he says:

“The Unbegun made the Son a beginning of things made and advanced him as His Son by adoption. Understand that the Monad was, but the Dyad was not, before it came to exist. Thus there is the Triad, but not in equal glories. Not intermingling with each other are their substances. One equal to the son, the Superior is able to beget, but one more excellent or superior or greater, He is not able. At God’s will the Son is what and whatsoever he is. God is incomprehensible to His Son. He is what He is to Himself: Unspeakable. The Father knows the Son, but the Son does not know himself.” Page 55.

Rubenstein, Richard. [When Jesus Became God](#). NY. Harcourt Brace & Co. 1999.

Wherever true Christian community is formed, compassion happens in the world. The energy that radiated from the early Christian communities was indeed divine energy that had a transforming influence on all who were touched by it. That same energy continues to show itself wherever people come together in Christ’s name and take on his joke in humbleness and gentleness of heart (Mt. 11: 29). Pg. 57.

Nouwen, Henri, et al. [Compassion](#). NY. Image Books. 1983.

Humility always has a good cry and then forgets petty insults. Remember this. If you want to conquer the devil, arm yourself with humility.' - Hildegard of Bingen, "Scivias"

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Aurelio, John R. [Colors](#). NY. Crossroad. 1993. **THE SACRED COIN** : Page 133.

White, William R. [Stories For the Journey](#). Minneapolis, MN. Augsburg Pub. House. 1988. **In the Presence**: Page 66.

Wiederkehr, Macrina, OSB. [A Tree Full of Angels](#). San Francisco, CA. Harper & Row. 1988. **GLORY** :Pages 24-25.

Greeley, Andrew. [Complaints Against God](#). Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1989. **GOD’S LOVE FOR US**: Page 26ff.