

Sunday, July 9, 2023
Matthew 11:25-30
(6th Sunday after Pentecost)



Ascension Lutheran Church
Pastor Edwin Aparicio

Grace and peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In my country there are many families that are dedicated to buying oxen. They train them and use them for agricultural work and they use them for transportation. In fact, to get the agricultural crops the oxen are the means of transportation that families use.

In the past when there was no drinking water in the communities, the families used the oxen to go to the city in search of water in large carts with two barrels that held approximately 200 liters of water each. The people who came to bring water from the city had to leave their houses almost at midnight to make as many trips as possible during the day.

Since they left when it was still the middle of the night, the families put a candlestick in the middle of the yoke of the oxen so that the light would guide them all the way until they reached the well. All along the way there were other people with their large carts and their barrels full of water and with their candlesticks always in the center of the yoke. The load was heavy, but the light helped them illuminate the best path to reduce the effort and the fatigue of the animal throughout the trip.

In today's Gospel Jesus says "take my yoke upon you and you will find rest for your souls". He makes an invitation that we only find in the Gospel of Matthew. When Jesus saw the crowds that came to him, he had compassion on them and said, "Come to me all of you who are tired and burdened and I will give you rest". Come to me all those who are in despair, and I will make that hope flourish again. Come to me all those who believed that life no longer makes sense. Come to me, come to me and you will find rest for your life.

Jesus' words remind us of the story of Israel's return from Egyptian captivity. God gave them liberation from the heavy yoke of bondage. The book of Leviticus says "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would stop being slaves. I broke the bands of their yoke and made them walk with their heads up." But again, the people found themselves experiencing a new heavy yoke imposed by the spiritual leaders.

Jesus was condemning the heavy burdens that the religious leaders had set over the people. Burdens that even they themselves could not bear. In the Gospel of John, we find the story of a sinful woman. The religious leaders brought to Jesus a woman who had been caught in adultery. Putting her in the middle, they said to him: Master, this woman has been caught in the very act of adultery. The law of Moses commands us to stone such women. What do you say about it? And Jesus told them, whoever is without sin should cast the first stone. But when they heard what he said, they withdrew one by one. They knew that not even they could handle the burden that they had imposed on said woman.

Jesus says. Come to me and you will find rest. Believe in me and you will find peace. Practice what I have taught you and you will find comfort. I will give you a new yoke, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your soul.

Jesus' invitation is the opposite of the religious burden that the people were experiencing. Jesus was promising a yoke that would produce rest from the fatigue and burden that they were receiving. Jesus's yoke was leading people to have a better understanding of the journey life means. They only needed to commit themselves to him by believing in his words.

A few months ago, someone told me, "Now I can rest." And I asked him, why do you say that? I thought I was saved by works. In all my life I have been working very hard to do works to earn salvation. But now I have a

Sunday, July 9, 2023
Matthew 11:25-30
(6th Sunday after Pentecost)



Ascension Lutheran Church
Pastor Edwin Aparicio

better understanding. I am saved by grace. I am saved because of what Jesus did for me on the cross. If I help someone, I do it because it comes from my heart. I would also add this, your actions of charity are the result of the work of what God is already doing in your being.

Jesus offers us a true life, a spiritual rest. One that shapes us from the inside out and makes us the kind of people who love and serve God from a renewed condition under the easy yoke of discipleship.

Come to me is the invitation of Jesus to all those who have struggled and have become tired of spirit. As disciples we will continue to experience frustrations, trials and suffering, but these burdens become lighter and more bearable with his help because he has joined us and helps us with the yoke. But he not only helps us with the yoke, but he himself places a candlestick in the center of the yoke to light our way.

The yoke of Jesus is a lifelong learning process, but this learning does not produce fatigue, but rest for our souls. Jesus is not taking away any yoke, but rather he is offering a gentle new yoke for all of us. But it also needs the willingness of all of us to accept it. A yoke does not work individually. This needs teamwork between each one of us and Jesus. If the load is very heavy, Jesus tells you calm down, let me take you out of this, but don't get rid of the yoke because I promised you and I will not let you alone.

Come to me, come to me and I will give you rest. May the grace and peace from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.