

“The Blessing of the Yoke of Jesus Christ”

Text: Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus said: “Come to me, all who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It is a call to completely trust your Savior Jesus Christ. I have made reference to it any number of times, for it is inscribed above our altar. It has been a comfort to me and I pray also a comfort to you.

One time in the Philippines a pastor wanted to make this point to his people, so he told them a parable. The driver of a carabao wagon was on his way to market when he overtook an old man carrying a heavy load. He took compassion on the man and invited him into his wagon. Gratefully the old man accepted. After a few minutes, the driver turned to see how the man was doing. Much to his Surprise, he found the man still straining under the heavy weight, for he had not taken the burden off of his shoulders.

The people of Jesus day and the people of today carry burdens. It can be from outside them or it can be one that they produce themselves. The religious leaders of Jesus day placed heavy burdens on the people in terms of religious obligations. The worries in their day and our day can be quite a burden as well. There are many in both days that think that by their good behavior they can be saved. This is another impossible burden to bear. Jesus extends the invitation to all. The commentator R.C. H. Lenski said that it was both a yoke and a rest. You can know through faith in your Savior and know-

THE BLESSING OF THE YOKE OF JESUS CHRIST

I. It is unlike the way of the world

II. It brings the rest that people really need

I.

A.1. The Apostle Paul wrote: “For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (I Corinthians 1:25) Jesus is saying the same thing. He is thankful that the knowledge of salvation has been revealed to little children. He is talking here about the disciples and believers of all time. It is not about logic, but it is about faith.

When Jesus speaks of the wise and intelligent he is talking about thinkers in all disciplines who believe their knowledge and logic as being far superior to everything or anyone else. Consider that the infants and small children lack everything and realize their emptiness. Several times in this gospel Jesus mentions this:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit
- Blessed are those who mourn
- Blessed are the meek
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst

You will recognize those as coming from the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-6) St. Paul considered that everything was lost for the sake of knowing Jesus Christ as his Savior. (Philippians 3:8) I might add that he was one who had everything in a worldly sense.

2. The good news is that this all comes from God. We really have nothing to do with it except to believe what has been accomplished in our Savior Jesus Christ. It is that way because it comes to us by God’s grace. If we had something to do with it, it would be incomplete. In that case, something would be missing. That is why Jesus says: “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Is something asked of us as Christians? Certainly it is as we are called to follow our Savior. We are called to live in a certain way and not like everyone else. What we do cannot gain our salvation!

B.1. The world would prefer that it had something to do with salvation. That is one of the secrets of the various cults. They have a religion that is “man-centered” and people really like that. You have probably engaged in these types of discussions with neighbors, people in the work place, or maybe even family members.

2. On one occasion a rich young man wanted to know what he needed to do for his salvation. He claimed to have perfectly followed the law. Jesus told him that he lacked only giving away what he had and to follow Jesus. He couldn’t do that because he loved his riches too much. In commenting Jesus told the disciples the difficulty the rich had in following him.

The disciples said in response, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus answered: “With man this impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:35) What you do cannot gain your salvation. It comes only as God has accomplished it in Jesus Christ. Our Lutheran Confessions say: “In Christ he saves us out of pure mercy, without any merit or good works of ours according to the purpose of his will.” (FC SD Article 11)

II.

A.1. In the meaning of the Third Article of the Apostles Creed it starts: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.” Jesus Christ has accomplished everything that is necessary for our salvation.

In Jesus Christ, God has come into our world and does what man could never do. The people of all days place an overwhelming burden upon themselves when they attempt to accomplish their salvation on their own. In verse 27, Jesus says: “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one know the Son except the Father, and

no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

2. Jesus had to be both God and man in order to accomplish our salvation. As man he took our place and as God, he accomplishes only what God can do and accomplishes the eternal victory for us. We know that message not by our wisdom or logic, but only through the word. In that word Jesus invites us: “Come to me.....” He invites and He draws through the Holy Spirit.

B.1. “I will give you rest.” These are the words of Jesus. He brings true peace and contentment in our lives. Instead of striving and struggling with our burdens, he is there to carry them for us. King David said: “Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.” (Psalm 55:22) In a similar way St. Peter tells us: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties upon him, because he cares for you.” (I Peter 5:6-7)

The world has no such promise for you and me. It appeals to our strength and when troubles come it is another matter altogether. Your faith calls you to trust in God’s providing and you know that he will deliver.

2. The yoke and rest are really two sides of the same coin. Does Jesus have expectations? You know he does. We take his yoke, but he gives us rest. It is a rest that is guaranteed. Jesus says: “Whoever believes has eternal life.” (John 6:47) We may think of his yoke in terms of what is expected of us or what we surrender or suffer. It is a blessing because from him we receive his power, help, strength and consolation. May you be comforted and strengthened with that blessing! In Jesus name. Amen.