

Today's text from Matthew about yokes and burdens is a well-known part of the Bible, for on the surface it sounds really nice and comforting. It sounds too good to be true to come to Jesus and off load our troubles and burdens on to him and walk away refreshed and lightened in life.

Well that's how I have read this in the past. But when you read it and read it and read it again, one might begin to think otherwise. The text doesn't say exchange my yoke for Jesus'. In fact there is no reference to my yoke, but only to Jesus' yoke.

So if Jesus has a yoke (like that which we talked about earlier), then we share his yoke. To be joined with Jesus means to share the load and to walk together, in his way "let me teach you" he says – a call to discipleship rather than a dump my burden and run!

Jesus says that the yoke *he* has for us is "easy." The Greek word (*chrestos*) is better translated as "well fitting, or good fit" "suitable," or even "useful." GOOD TO DO

So being linked to Jesus is a good fitting call, a call to the way of Jesus, to his way, to God's way.

So the invitation, is to come to Jesus and share his load, his way. We in turn, invite others and to link up with them, and with Jesus, and with others. This way of Jesus is none other than love, love one another, forgive one another, bless those who persecute you, seek justice for the needy. The burden of love ...is light!

The invitation to come to Jesus is an invitation to discipleship, that is, to follow him and his teaching. This is open for all – come to me, ALL... any one.... Everyone.... Follow me, take my yoke upon you

Eugene Peterson captures the essence of this when in the Message Bible he writes:

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

How does Jesus know this? How can he offer this. Well a few verses before Jesus declares that the 'Father' ,God , Yahweh has handed all things over to me ; 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.

Here Jesus is saying he is one with God, one with the very wisdom of God, the way of God. One as God. I will give you rest – my yoke. Jesus is nt saying the father's way, God's way , but come to me, I, my.

This is Wisdom speaking, this is the Spirit whispering, this is the Logos/the Word. When you connect with me, when you yoke up with me, you connect with Gods ways for God longs to connect with us, and **in Christ** comes the one who seeks to being relief, justice, liberation, peace and mercy, and calls us to share that with others, to live the Jesus way

When we look at the world its not all that difficult to notice its fractured nature and feel despondent

from poverty and unjust economic and power relations between rich and poor, to the slavery of human trafficking; from exploitation of the planet's resources, to corruption in business and government across the world; from wars between nations, to conflict between factions, families and individuals, the Struggle for rights and reconciliation, global pandemic and racism.

we might feel that human capacity alone cannot address the burdens and struggles we face. It is increasingly important then, that people of faith resist the temptation of cynicism and pessimism, and allow ourselves to be empowered and inspired by the Christ we follow.

It is increasingly necessary for us to live our faith in the daily choices that impact the realities of our world, and in extending Christ's invitation to others.

This doesn't necessarily mean preaching or seeking to convert others. It's more likely to mean , working alongside (being yoked with) the least to ease their burdens and to stand against the unjust people and institutions that oppress and enslave.

It means allowing our faith and hope to inspire how we choose to buy, eat, dress, drive and vote. It means praying, thinking and learning globally, while acting and contributing locally.

At it's heart, receiving Christ's invitation is more than just a personal experience of peace and rest. It is a call to be those who seek to draw others into Christ's rest along with us, and to spread Christ's peace and mercy as far as we can, in whatever way we can. It is a call to discipleship.

How do we live this out?

By recognising that the weary and burdened are all around us, in every family, every community and every neighbourhood. The broken and weary ones are us, and those we live with. This is why Christ's invitation is such a wonderful, life-giving promise.

We need only be committed enough to Christ's invitation that we will not keep it to ourselves, but seek to share it with those around us. It is when we open our arms and the doors of our churches to all – whoever they may be or however we may disagree with them – that we offer rest, love, inspiration, instead of the burden of judgement and guilt.

It is when we live simply and generously, resisting the temptation to hoard, accumulate and consume more than we need that we bring rest to those who struggle to survive each day.

It is when we work within our community to bring change to unjust laws, to take notice of the hurting and vulnerable ones, and to welcome those with whom we would normally not associate that we bring rest to others.

Its when this prayer becomes a reality – let us pray!

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

This prayer maybe counter cultural and not the way of the world, but it speaks of the Jesus way, a gracious, inclusive openness that can offer an alternative **way of being** in this often burdensome world.