



CARRYING BURDENS

“Carrying Burdens”

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
Saturday and Sunday, July 8 and 9, 2017

All Services

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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Zechariah 9:9-12; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Recently I read a 1993 article written in *Newsweek* called *The Whining Generation*. It was written by a baby boomer, someone who was born between 1945 and 1960, to complain about those of the next generation, Generation X, those who were born between 1961 to 1981. Generally, the article talked about how Gen-X's were, well, they were just wanting. They wanted things handed to them, they weren't willing to work hard. And basically, the article was about this baby boomer whining about Gen-X's whining. Now of course we have a new generation, a generation called Millennials, and if you've watched the news this week you've got to see millennials destroying property in Hamburg at the G-20 Summit. I guess they're a little whiney as well.

The image I have in my head as I thought about this article and today's news is that of children who are pouting because other kids won't play the games they want to play. I guess in a way we are all a little bit of a whinier or snowflakes to some extent. But just in case you think that somehow, we're special, that it's only been in the last 60 plus years that we've gotten a little whiney, in today's gospel reading Jesus says this; “But to what will I compare this generation? It's like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, we played the flute for you and you didn't dance.” I guess there were whiney generations even back then. Pouting children, people who were never satisfied.

Jesus goes on to speak about the ministry of John the Baptist and his own ministry and how the people just don't seem to be satisfied. John of course emphasized God's justice in the law. Jesus emphasized grace and the gospel. John the Baptiste lived a Spartan existence, tea-totting, organic eating, crazed hell fire and brimstone preaching. Jesus enjoyed extravagant dinner parties, hanging out with the wrong crowd, turning water into wine just to spice things up, and preached peace and love. John seemed like he was crazy, abrasive and overly zealous. Jesus seemed, well, too normal, too friendly, and just not spiritual enough.

The Israelites had a problem of preexisting notions. Over a thousand years before Moses had warned the Israelites to look out for false prophets and rebellious sons, and John the Baptist and Jesus seemed to fit into that category. So as the people don't respond positively or enthusiastically to his message and Jesus is pained by all of it. After all, the people in Matthew's gospel **had** Jesus, they had seen him, they had heard his teaching, experienced his miracles. They had heard his words of grace and love and yet they just

did not want to follow. But behind all of that pain, behind the anguish that Jesus feels for these unbelieving people, behind their lack of faith is Jesus' Father, in control, not upset. All will be well, maybe different, but all will be well. And Jesus is not distracted or discouraged over their lack of faith. No, he makes this an opportunity to pray, to pray to his Father God and give thanksgiving for all those who come to him, come to him in a state of innocence. They are like children he says, and God cares for the little guy.

The kingdom of God Jesus teaches is gloriously simple. God wants fellowship with all of his beloved creation. And so, he presents himself, come to me he says, in Jesus God gets a face. The name "Jesus" after all means "God will save" his people. He is a Savior and he invites those who would follow to take on his yoke.

Now those of you who know something about farming know that a yoke is a farm tool for controlling the animals and helping them go in a straight line. But for the average Jew of Jesus day it had another meaning. When you followed a rabbi, you took on *his* yoke. Now following a Rabbi was out of reach for most people because to be a student of a rabbi meant you were the elite of the elite. It's like being an astronaut or brain surgeon today. For most of us it just wasn't going to happen. To be a rabbi you had to be a scholar, trained in languages and literature. You had to have the leisure time to be able to ponder and discuss important weighty issues as they related to scripture and the world. And the rabbi's themselves, those who were teachers, were known for their strictness, for their discipline and their determination. To take on the yoke of a rabbi was to take on the yoke of the Torah, the law. Rob Bell in his book *Velvet Elvis* says this "Different rabbis have different sets of rules, which are really different lists of what they forbade and what they permitted. A rabbi's set of rules and lists, which were really that rabbi's interpretation of how to live the Torah, was called that rabbi's yoke." When you follow a certain rabbi, you are following him because you believe that rabbi's interpretation was closest to what God intended through the scriptures. And when you followed that rabbi you were taking up that rabbi's yoke. One rabbi even said that his yoke was easy."

Jesus, in his rejection of the legalism of the Pharisees and Scribes, says, no, be like a child. Now the yoke of the Torah was represented by the Jewish male's prayer shawl. I have an example of one here. It was worn around the shoulders and looks very much like the stole that the pastor wears. At the end of the shawl are a number of tassels, the knots representing the law of God. In taking on the yoke of Jesus, Jesus is saying that when you do so, it is in recognition that Jesus is helping you carrying the burdens of life. Taking on the yoke of Jesus is a way of living life in peace and balance. Taking on Jesus' yoke is to live a life in freedom and to have quality of life. To take on Jesus' yoke is for our burdens to be lifted by our Savior.

So, what needs to be lifted in your life? What burdens do you carry around for which you need Jesus? Is it illness or loneliness, loss, addition, financial struggles? Take *his* yoke upon you. For that we need a Savior, a Deliverer. To take on his yoke and to learn from him.

Notice what Jesus says there, take **my** yoke and learn from **me**. "From me", he says. He is present to each one of us through word and sacrament, through service and caring and sharing for neighbor. Jesus wants to be your personal teacher, your personal rabbi and because he is risen from the dead he lives. And he is our living tutor in the things of

God speaking to you and to me personally. This rabbi is gentle and humble of heart. Jesus is the Son of the Lord who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

And what happens when we follow the Savior when we give ourselves over to our teacher Jesus, when we take his yoke he gives this simple promise? “You will find rest for your souls.” No need to whine. Knowing this love for us, knowing you are never alone, knowing our Savior’s support makes everything easier. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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