

Sermon: Wisdom's Voice
Matthew 11:25-30

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At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; 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. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Sermon

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” These are words of comfort often come to mind in the midst of our hectic lives when we are feeling stretched thin by all that is asked of us in our lives. Those stretched moments where it feels like our life has pulled us in seven different directions and not one of them is enjoyable or renewing, everything looks like drudgery, frustration, or meaningless work. These are also words that personify wisdom. In the Hebrew Scriptures, wisdom is often personified as a person, often a woman, who calls the people to seek them, come to them, and find what wisdom has to offer. You can find this in the words of Proverbs and in the Apocrypha text Sirach. And so we hear Christ’s words that come as a hope for relief and the wisdom of sabbath rest. And though Christ is that place of comfort and relief, we must be careful in our thinking that this is a calling to pull out the hammock and relax under the trees. No, it is not a hammock that Jesus offers but a yoke.

According to Tom Long, “The yoke was a symbol of obedience to the law and wisdom of God. Likewise, Jesus’ yoke is obedience to the commandments of the kingdom of heaven, a willingness to serve others with humility and mercy.” The first bit of wisdom that Jesus offer is obedience, specifically obedience to the laws of the kingdom of heaven. Though Jesus lays out those laws in detail through the sermon on the Mount, we have a summary of the law, both Hebrew and Kingdom, in Christ’s answer to what are the greatest commandments, “Love God and love your neighbor.” When we learn to obey these two commandments, not just at the surface, but in all their depths of meaning, to truly love God and neighbor, then we begin to see kingdom wisdom.

“For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Jesus does not offer up a vacation package where our calling is to sit with our feet in the sand and sip drinks with umbrellas in them. “To the contrary, there is a cross to be carried (Matt 16:24), and the world is full of wolves (Matt. 10:16).” It is not that the call of discipleship is perfectly peaceful, but that the path is the way of God, and if we are on God’s path, then we find, even in the more anxious moments, a deep and lasting satisfaction within our very being.

It is never easy to visit someone who is suffering, whether it is in a hospital or nursing home or their own home. It is never easy to face the tough questions in life, about grief and loss and purpose in the midst of sorrow. Yet Christ calls us to care for one another, especially those who are hurting or in pain. And there is something so satisfying to the soul when we are able to hold the hand of a neighbor, even just for a short time. When we are able to speak love, when we are able to be present in the midst of loneliness. It is also never easy to face the pain of homelessness or of addiction. But each month we are called to feed the hungry, even when the hungry may not have the best of manors or the ability to keep good hygiene. Each week we are called to sit with the afflicted suffering with a loved ones addiction. And when we find the time and courage to give to those who are suffering in any form, we find our tasks easy and light because they are the will of God.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart.” Two of the most important pieces of wisdom that Christ has to offer is how to be gentle and humble in heart. We all love a go getter, someone who knows what they want and goes out and gets it. But none of us like a bully, someone who picks on the weak and pushes others down so that they can rise. Jesus’ wisdom is that we need to walk our path with gentleness. It is hard to show love when we are ordering people around. It is much easier when we learn to encourage and compliment, when we are able to listen and give feedback. Jesus’ wisdom is that we need to walk our path with humble hearts. Anyone who has been around children realize that they come to the point that they are smarter than you. You share how you would like them to do something, but they know a better way. At first they tell you how to play the games that you have been playing since you were a child. Then it is the same jokes that have been told for forever. Eventually they try to tell you how to drive. And finally they tell you how to live a good life. And hopefully, without too much damage or pain, they learn that maybe mom and dad aren’t as ignorant as they thought. They learn humility.

And maybe that is something they could teach us as well. How to be more humble. To realize that we don’t always have all the facts or that our opinions are not always fully informed. We don’t know what is happening in the lives of our colleagues and friends before we see them. We don’t know what pain or challenge they are bearing behind a half smile or a pretend chuckle. But humility begs us to be ready to ask the important questions more often than demand the right answers.

Obedience, gentleness, humility. These are all part of Christ’s wisdom that is offered and with them, we do find deep purpose within our every day walk of life. May we seek to live into Christ’s wisdom each day as we walk the path he has given. Amen