

Busy: The Right Tempo - Matthew 11:28-30

Norwalk Christian Church, March 8, 2019, Lent 1 - Non-Lectionary, WDS Series - Busy

Ugh. It's Lent again! It seems to come around every year, this season where we are made to feel inadequate. Like we're not enough. Like we should be doing more--more praying, more scripture reading, more church. Who has the time for all of that?

With work, the piles and piles of never-ending laundry, the dishes, the kids. And soon--probably not soon enough--spring will be here. Which means soccer, and spring cleaning, and all the mud and melt. I'm exhausted just thinking about it.

And here we are, awake an hour earlier than normal, so we can be reminded that we are not good enough. That we should be doing more. I don't know about you, but the only thing I want to give up this Lent is LENT.

Our scripture reading this morning doesn't help. I mean, it sounds innocent enough. "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."

It sounds wonderful, doesn't it? *Rest. Easy. Gentle. Light.* But there are more words in there. Words like *Take. Yoke. Learn. Burden.*

Since when has a burden been light? Since when has a yoke been easy? It makes no sense. Jesus, you've got to be *yoking!* [HAHA]

Okay, that was a bad joke, but--seriously, what is up with this text? Is Jesus joking? With all we have going on in our life--the pressure to succeed, perform, and impress, to raise good kids and grandkids, take care of our health, eat right, and maybe find some time for yourself--Jesus comes along and ties one more burden on us. Oh, by the way: make sure you find enough time for God, too. How is *that* yoke *easy*?!

I was so stumped by this scripture, that I decided to pull out my Greek. All those years of Biblical Greek in college and seminary--and I realized, I don't remember a bit of it. So, I asked Marti, and she told me to just google it, so I did. And guess what-- "My yoke is easy", that's actually a bad translation.

The New Testament, it's written in Greek. And the English word "easy" is not the best equivalent for what Jesus actually said. But more on that in a minute, because first, I think we need to step back and explain what a Yoke even is.

We're not talking about the yellow center of an egg. A yoke is a harness, placed around the neck of an ox. Attached to it was a plow. And the ox would walk with this yolk around the neck, plowing the field.

It sounds horrible, doesn't it. But even worse was when the yoke was ill-fitting. The burden was heavy enough, but if the yoke, meant to make the burden easier, didn't fit right, then it made it heavier. Every pull, every movement hurt.

Which brings us back to the Greek--Jesus isn't saying that his yoke is easy. That'd be cruel. Nothing worth doing is easy. What the Greek word actually means is, the yoke "fits well." It's your size. It's the yoke you need in order to best do what you need to do.

A couple weeks ago, Marti mentioned in her sermon our trainer at Anytime Fitness, Dani, and then Marti--most inappropriately--showed off her bicep. Well, Dani is here this morning--welcome Dani!--and if I wasn't wearing this jacket, I'd totally show off my bicep.

But Dani is teaching me something, other than about all these muscles I didn't even know I had which now hurt all the time. But I am learning the value of finding the right...burden. The right weight.

When doing weight training, if you try to lift too light of weight, you won't challenge yourself. You'll do the work out, but you will not gain any strength.

But if you use too challenging of a weight--even if you can lift it--you might hurt yourself. Dani is always telling us, "Don't arch your back!" Also, "Engage your core!"

The secret is to find the right weight for you. The perfect combination of what you can already do and what will challenge you. Not too easy, but not too hard, either. The right fit for you.

If weight-training isn't the right metaphor for you, what about music?

The other day, Taylor had her band solo competition, that grueling exercise the middle school puts their band students through. And sitting there listening to a number of students receive feedback from the judge, there a theme in the advice the judge gave.

A number of the musical pieces were complicated--a lot of notes crammed into a measure. And the judge told them they should slow down. Find the right tempo *for you*, so you can get to all the notes. Slow down. Find the right tempo.

Maybe that's what Lent *should* be about. Not more guilt. Not more of a burden. But an invitation to slow down and find your tempo.

We are busy. We've got a lot to do--a lot of weight to lift, a lot of notes to hit. We don't need one thing more--what we need is to find the right fit. The right weight. The right tempo.

But how do we resist just seeing the Christian life as one more thing to do?

Maybe we are still not reading Jesus' words right. "My yoke is well-fitting." Yes, but what is a yoke again? Yes, it's this thing they put on oxen to help them carry the burden of a plow, so they could do their work efficiently and without getting hurt in the process.

But a yoke was meant for two oxen. One ox was never expected to plow it all, alone. The yoke bound two together, and together they shared the labor.

Knowing that, maybe now we are ready to accept Jesus' invitation. Come to me, he says, all y'all who are weary and burdened--burdened by the world, burdened by the church, burdened by yourself and the weight of all those expectations you carry--come to me, and I will give you rest. Try my yoke on, for it is gentle. It is well-fitting. But it's not meant only for you. You and I--we're in this together. I'm not adding a burden to you, I'm yoking myself to you. Together, you and I, we will plow through this together. Together, we will carry your load, and you will find rest for your soul.

Jesus' invitation isn't to add to your burden. Jesus' invitation is to share your burden. To take on his yoke, and learn from him how to carry your burdens, how to find your tempo, how to find the right fit for your life--discovering what it is you were created to be.

The other day on Facebook, I saw Sally Reavely's post about her orchids blooming. They're beautiful, Sally, and it gives us hope for spring. It reminded me of a movie I watched years ago, *Adaptation*, which was an adaptation of the book, *The Orchid Thief*. There's a quote from that book about the attraction between an insect and the specific orchid it is meant to pollinate, and it might be just what we need to hear today:

There's a certain orchid that looks exactly like a certain insect so the insect is drawn to this flower—its double, its soul-mate—and wants nothing more than to make love to it. After the insect flies off, it spots another soul-mate flower and makes love to it, thus pollinating it. And neither flower nor the insect will ever understand the significance of their lovemaking. I mean, how could they know that because of their little dance the world lives, but it does. By simply doing what they're designed to do, something large and magnificent happens. In this sense they show us how to live, how the only barometer you have is your heart; how when you spot your flower you can't let anything get in your way.

Let me free you of a burden today. Lent...the Christian Life--it is not about adding one more thing to your to-do list. Being yoked to Christ is about finding yourself. Finding your flower.

God is not trying to add to the busyness in your life. God is helping us discover our orchid. That thing we were created for. Finding *your* tempo. Finding *your* purpose. Finding *your* calling in life.

So Church, this Lent, give up what you need to give up. Take on what you need to take on. But, more than anything, accept Jesus' invitation. Yoke your life to his life. Find your pace. Learn from Jesus how to be the best you.

Come to him, you who are weary and heavy-burdened, and find your rest. Yoke up with Jesus; learn for Jesus. For his yoke is just the right fit. His pace is just the right tempo. And yoked to Jesus, he will carry you to your flower, to that place and pace you were meant for.

Amen.