

“Your choice” A sermon by Lee Ireland  
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church  
July 9, 2017 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost  
Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Prayer: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

Are you busy? Do you tell your friends you are busy? Do your friends tell you they are busy? Was there ever a time in your life that you were not busy? If that's the case, it was probably a long time ago, since most everyone you meet describes their lives as 'busy.' Yes, when we meet someone today, we expect them to tell us he or she is busy.

Right after Christmas, one of the busiest times of the year, an article appeared in the LATimes (1/1/2017) explaining how 'busyness' has become a status symbol. The article explained that busyness is now a badge of honor, a status symbol in our 24/7 world. Research surveys found the busier you are, the higher your perceived status. The study found that people who shopped online for groceries were perceived as more important since they are too busy to go to the grocery store.

So, all you busy people. What do you think Jesus thinks about your busyness?

In the last part of the scripture, Jesus is talking about rest – rest for the weary. In our world, we'd probably update Jesus' statement to say rest from being so busy. But before we go there, let's look at a couple of verses from today's scripture that may help us understand better what Jesus means by rest for the weary.

Jesus said to those gathered around him: **“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”**

Jesus says that he and John can't win. No matter what he or John do, they are criticized. I believe that most of us are familiar with that situation! It's a catch 22. But what is Jesus' point? Jesus is talking about those who are thinking at a superficial level, criticizing because they don't like Jesus' message. Jesus tells them to look at the results of his and John's work – to look at their deeds.

The religious elite expected Jesus to do as they said, to get in line behind them. Jesus was telling them to open their eyes to another reality. But they were so preoccupied following the law as the religious elite thought the laws should be kept that they missed the Son of God right before their very eyes.

It's not that the law was bad, it was the religious elites' interpretation of the law that was the problem. Keeping the law for them became a substitute for serving God and neighbor. I don't think the religious elite were busy serving God. They were busy serving themselves – and Jesus was pointing that out to them.

Jesus' world was full of distractions, things that kept people busy and kept them from recognizing Jesus as God-before-their-very-eyes. Who are the Pharisees of today that keep us busy, that keep us from recognizing Jesus right before our eyes? I'd like for you to consider what or who is keeping you busy and is that busyness keeping you from serving God.

Let's move on to the last three verses of the scripture. Jesus says he will provide rest – rest from our busyness and worldly expectations. These are probably the most well-known words from this text: **“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.”**

What burdens are being carried? Jesus may have been referring to the demands of the religious elite. Or to the oppression of the Roman government, high taxes and the ruthless way the Romans dealt with those they had conquered. Or he could simply be thinking about the trials and difficulties encountered in everyday life, whether it be then or today. You can certainly relate those burdens to today's world. Whatever the burden or whatever makes you weary, Jesus will give you rest.

How? Jesus says to take on his yoke. The yoke is a familiar symbol of burdens and oppression. You may think of a yoke that was put on an ox to pull a cart or plow. Or you may think of a yoke being put on prisoners of war and slaves.

There's another meaning for yoke. You may remember another definition of yoke as a bond or a tie. I believe that is what Jesus means here. We need to bond ourselves or tie ourselves together with Jesus. In doing so, our burdens will be lighter – if we learn from him.

(GO VERY SLOW)

Jesus says we are to learn from him. This is an invitation to discipleship. It's not an invitation to learn something like you would memorize facts for a test. It is an invitation to a new way of life. It is an invitation to adopt a new way of living and thinking, to live and act like a disciple of Jesus. It is an invitation to a way of living that is not burdensome, but life-giving. It's an invitation that isn't ruled by busyness nor the expectations of others. It is a way that is life-giving, a way where you find peace for your soul.

Busyness or resting in the Lord? Your choice.