

Circuit Worship 5 July 2020 prepared by Rev'd Lesley Dinham

**Welcome:** Good morning and welcome....

**Call to Worship:** Jesus says: *'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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.'*

Let us come to the Lord our God; let us seek his rest as we come to worship, to prayer and to be fed by his precious Word.

Let us pray: We are here today Lord, to worship you. As we bow our heads before you, we want to be amazed by your wisdom, bowled over by your love, and completely lost in you. Lord, open our hearts to receive you in ways beyond whatever we could ever ask or imagine. Amen.

**Hymn: 'Holy, Holy, Holy' (StF:11)**

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:  
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,  
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,  
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,  
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,  
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,  
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!  
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea;  
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Reginald Heber (1783–1826) (alt.) Based on Revelation 4:8-11

**Prayers of worship, confession and the Lord's prayer:**

As Jesus praised his Father in heaven, so do we. We praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth. In your gracious will you have hidden things from the wise, and revealed them to us, your children, through Jesus, your most precious Son.

For this loving God, we praise you with everlasting praise. Amen.

Lord Jesus you have said that we can come to you to cast our cares upon you and to lay down our burdens. You paid the ultimate sacrifice of your life so that we can do this in confidence, knowing that the price is paid for our sin.

For this loving Lord, we praise you with everlasting praise. Amen.

Holy Spirit come, cleanse us, renew us and restore us so that we shall be whiter than snow; then to be your hands and your feet in the communities of which we are a part. Our prayers we offer to you, our triune God. Amen.

Now let us now join together in the prayer our Lord taught us to say:

### **Traditional**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily  
bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who  
trespass against us  
And lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory  
for ever and ever. Amen

### **Contemporary**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily  
bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who  
sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom the power  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen

**Our reading today is from Matthew's Gospel.** It's a strange reading in that it begins in the middle of a conversation. Let's put it in context. Jesus has just been talking with his disciples concerning John the Baptist and now he goes on to reflect on how people resist making a commitment – like children refusing to join in each other's games. John plays a dirge and Jesus plays a dance – but neither is acceptable. People complain that John starves and Jesus stuffs – and so find a reason to reject them both! But then, in our next verses Jesus turns from frustration to praise. God is Lord of all and Jesus commits himself wholeheartedly to the Father's will – and invites us do the same. Then, like the skilled and careful carpenter shaping a yoke, he will fit us with the gentle, liberating purpose of God.

### **Reading: Mat.11:16-19,25-30 (NRSVA)**

<sup>16</sup> 'But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another, <sup>17</sup> "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn."

<sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon"; <sup>19</sup> 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 Thanks His Father**

<sup>25</sup> 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; <sup>26</sup> yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

### **Reflection from Jonathan Thompson**

The problem with this generation, Jesus, says, is that they listen neither to John nor to Jesus. John's austere lifestyle led people to accuse him of having a demon; while Jesus' habit of eating and drinking with sinners earned him a bad reputation (Matthew 11:18-19).

This generation finds reason to take offence at both John and Jesus, and therefore, they evade the call of both. They are like children in the market place who cannot decide whether they want to play wedding games or funeral songs and, end up playing neither (11:16-17).

Skipping over the 'woes' to unrepentant Galilean towns (11:20-24), our reading picks up again at verse 25, with Jesus' prayer thanking His Father because He has, *'hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and revealed them to infants.'* The wise and intelligent may refer to any who reject Jesus and his message, but perhaps especially to the religious leaders, whom Jesus often rebukes for their self-importance and hypocrisy. The Scribes and Pharisees pride themselves on being learned in the law, yet fail to understand the basics of justice, mercy, and faith (23:23). They repeatedly reject Jesus and conspire against him, thus conspiring against the very purposes of God. The 'infants' mean those who are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, all whom Jesus calls blessed. Jesus' prayer then turns to invitation: 'Come to me, all you that are weary, and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'(11:28).

Who are the ones labouring wearily, and heavily burdened? It is the common people rather than their leaders, whose strict obedience to the law, placed great burdens on people's shoulders. Jesus rejects these leaders, and says: *'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles Lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you, but whoever wishes to be first among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'*(20:25-28)

Jesus further invites the weary; *'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.'*(11:29-30)

What is the yoke Jesus offers? We might infer that it is his teaching, his way of discipleship, which is not burdensome, but life-giving. He invites the weary to learn from him, to be yoked to the one in whom God's Kingdom of justice, mercy, and compassion is breaking into this world, and to find the rest for which the soul longs.

It is not that Jesus invites us to a life of ease. Following him will be full of risks and challenges, as he has made abundantly clear. He calls us to a life of humble service, but it is a life of freedom and joy, and not one of carrying heavy burdens. It is a life yoked to Jesus, under God's gracious and merciful reign, free from the burden of sin, and the need to prove oneself, free to rest deeply and securely in God's everlasting love.

### **For Reflection:**

1. What is the difference between 'weary' and 'heavy-laden'?
2. Can you think of a time when you were weary and burdened down? Please share.
3. Mat.11:28 – What does Jesus promise those who come to Him? What does that mean?
4. Jesus tells us to: 'learn from him.' In what areas of your life have you learned from Jesus?

### **Hymn: 'What a friend we have in Jesus' (StF:531)**

What a friend we have in Jesus,  
all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
all because we do not carry  
everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations,  
is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged:  
take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness:  
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,  
cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Saviour, still our refuge —  
take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Do your friends despise, forsake you?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer;  
in his arms he'll take and shield you,  
you will find a solace there.

Joseph Medlicott Scriven (1819–1886)

### **Prayers of intercession:**

Gracious and Holy God. You have promised that when two or three are gathered in your name then you are there in the midst. Hear our prayers this day we ask, so that those matters which burden our hearts are laid down before you. We pray this day for all in authority, that they will be respectfully conscious of the weight on their shoulders, and that they will act responsibly for the people they serve. We pray for them in their personal lives, with the worries and cares that only they see.

Lord God, we lift your children before you.

**May they find rest for their souls.**

We pray this day for our friends, family, colleagues. We pray that as we walk alongside them, you will use us to bring them close to you, and they will learn of your love.

Lord God, we lift your children before you.

**May they find rest for their souls.**

We pray this day that we might be sensitive to the needs of those around us – the people we see every day, perhaps as fleetingly as at the shops, or whilst stood in a queue. We have no idea what burdens they are carrying, or if they need a kind word from you that only we can give.

Lord God, we lift your children before you.

**May they find rest for their souls.**

Lord help to so see the positive in people, even when it's hard, so to reach out to encourage them.

Lord God, we lift your children before you.

**May they find rest for their souls.**

**Amen.**

**Hymn: 'All my hope on God is founded' (StF:455)**

All my hope on God is founded ;  
he doth still my trust renew.  
Me through change and chance he guideth,  
only good and only true.  
God unknown,  
he alone  
calls my heart to be his own.

Human pride and earthly glory,  
sword and crown betray our trust ;  
what with care and toil we fashion,  
tower and temple, fall to dust.  
But God's power,  
hour by hour,  
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,  
deep his wisdom passing thought ;  
splendour, light, and life attend him,  
beauty springeth out of naught.  
Evermore  
from his store  
new-born worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty giver  
bounteous gifts on us bestow ;  
his desire our soul delighteth,  
pleasure leads us where we go.  
Love doth stand  
at his hand ;  
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from earth to God eternal  
sacrifice of praise be done,  
high above all praises praising  
for the gift of Christ his Son.  
Christ doth call  
one and all  
ye who follow shall not fall.

Robert Bridges (1844–1930) (alt.) based on Joachim Neander (1650–1680)

**BLESSING:** Jesus has called us to come to him and blessed us with his richness. Now he sends us out into his world, to make sure people see him, and listen to him, through us. What a responsibility, what a joy, what a privilege. We are yours, Lord. Use us as you will. **Amen.**

**The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all ever more. Amen.**

Please be assured that your Ministers are still here if you need anything at all during this time. We can be contacted on: 01933 312778 or 01933 622137.

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