

Come to me, all who are weary is a verse to have on the ready. Many know weariness to the bone, unable to sleep for burdens of heart 'n mind.

I've known weariness – though it's put in perspective when I think of Ukrainians, and people of Gaza, and those in Lebanon who's lifesavings are suddenly gone by a governmental crisis. I can't imagine. So I pray and support ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran World Federation's Augusta Victoria Hospital and listen as stories are told. Care matters.

We've gathered a sleigh-full of socks in response to *local* weariness. Again, thank you for your generosity. During today's Sending Song I'll invite Fred and Manny and others to come, gather these in arm to carry to their car so the socks can be taken to Union Station Homeless Services and put to use. I'll remind you.

Weariness isn't always physical. There's also emotional/psychological weariness – like when we taste the terror of impasses – not seeing any happy way forward. I've learned I can't save myself or others from some of life's hurdles or harms – and that's hard because I wish I could.

A quote I return to often from seminary days – emphasized by Ethics Prof, Wally Stuhr, is “When making decisions always leave room for human sin and brokenness.” Finding ethical/happy ways forward isn't about finding perfection. It's more about trusting grace.

That's what we hear in Jesus' invitation to take on his yoke and learn from him. Jesus was born into human life. Things weren't perfect. Imagine being born with no room in the inn, having disciples who betray and abandon, ending up on a cross.

But Jesus knew something huge. He knew who and whose he was. He belonged to God and knew God is love and loved him. And he knew of this amazing thing called grace.

When we hear, “*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,*” we know in the first century yokes were common. Yokes were laid on oxen and prisoners and slaves depriving them of freedom.

But “yoke” in the Bible is also used positively, as in Wisdom literature. It advises, “Put your neck under wisdom’s yoke. Let the Torah – Holy Scripture – guide your life.” It advises the freedom of choosing to yoke ourselves to love and grace for the sake of joy.

The yoke Jesus offers is his relationship with who he called Father. Jesus chose to keep connecting himself to One whose power was beyond his – and whose love was trustworthy. When Jesus invites us to learn from him he’s inviting us to choose to nurture intimacy with God through worship, prayer, and attention to scripture – spending time listen for God.

There may be no better news than Jesus’ reminder “*We do not live by bread alone, but by every word, address, outreach from God.*” God keeps speaking. In the original Greek, “my yoke is easy” was probably heard “my yoke is good” or “kind.”

Jesus freely chose living yoked to God’s promise of justice, mercy, and compassion. Jesus trusted God was bringing it about and freely chose to be a part of the bringing.

True rest comes from trusting God is at work for good – even when we can’t see it. We pray, “*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven.*” Luther taught that God does this without our prayer, but we pray so that it may also be done through us.

To all who are “weary and heavy laden,” Jesus says, “*Come to me. I will give you rest.*” The choice is ours – on a daily basis.

But coming to Jesus isn’t about a life of ease. Jesus’ life wasn’t easy. The lives of well-known followers of Jesus weren’t easy: St. Paul, Joan of Arc, Martin Luther, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Theresa. Or to less famously, Sister Helen who accompanied people on death row, and active today, Father Boyle of LA’s Home Boys. You can add your name too.

Jesus’ earthly life was difficult because he stood with the marginalized when that wasn’t popular. The cross is Christianity’s primary symbol for a reason. To take Jesus’ yoke says Yes to being our neighbors’ keeper. It knows no one has shalom until we all do and there are things to do to help that happen.

The “rest” Jesus speaks of is the rest we feel after doing something that brings life and good to the world. It may have inconvenienced us, but it also brings joy.

Lives yoked to Jesus depend not on our ability to do miracles or fix things, or even guess the best option forward. To choose to the yoke Jesus offers is to “*set your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring.*”

This verse from 1st Peter came to me at the start of the pandemic. I hadn’t attended to this verse before, but it made great sense when so much was upended. “*Set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring.*”

Grace is the reliable goodness of God. God is always good.

Living yoked to grace is what we learn from Jesus: trusting God keeps coming, keeps sharing our lives, makes it always Christmas. God with us!

Following Jesus is choosing to live this day as though we expect God to show up. Rather than set hope on wish dreams we set it on *God with us.*

Grace trusts God calls us by name.

Grace is healing deeper than disease.

Grace is God at work where we hadn’t anticipated.

Grace gets us through wearisome days because we know we’re not alone.

Deep rest isn’t about finding perfection. It’s about trusting grace is real.

Here’s the thing:

God is endlessly good at grace. May we set our hope on that!

Amen

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