

## **“Our-Burden-Bearing Lord”**

Date: July 5, 2020

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: Matthew 11:25-30

Occasion: Pentecost 5, Year A

Theme: Freedom, forgiveness, God’s comfort, care and concern for us

I’d like to begin today by sharing a cute story about a four year old girl, who was at the pediatrician for a check-up. As the doctor looked into her ears with a scope he asked, “Do you think I’ll find Big Bird down there?” The little girl remained silent. Next the doctor took a tongue depressor and looked down her throat. He asked, “Do you think I’ll find Cookie Monster down there?” Again the girl was silent.

Then the doctor put a stethoscope to her chest. As he listened to her heart beat he asked, “Do you think I’ll hear Barney in there?”

“Oh, no!” the little girl answered. “Jesus is in my heart. Barney’s on my underpants.” Isn’t that adorable? Now, if you’ve got Jesus in your heart, will you say “Amen?” And if you’ve got Barney on your underpants, well, that can just be your secret, ok?

Let’s get back to our gospel lesson. There is a wonderful legend concerning the quiet years of Jesus, the years prior to his public ministry. The legend claims that Jesus, who took up the trade of carpentry like his father, was one of the master yoke-makers in the Nazareth area.

A yoke, in case you don’t know, is a wooden bar, or frame, which is placed over the neck of two work animals, joining them together to enable them to do such work as pulling a heavy load, or plowing a field.

The legend says that people came from miles around to buy a yoke from Jesus because of the attention to detail he took in making each one. When customers arrived with their team of oxen or horses, Jesus would spend considerable time measuring the animals – their height, the width, the space

between them, the size of their shoulders. Then, a week later when the owner brought his team back, Jesus would place the new yoke over their shoulders, watching for any rough places, smoothing out the edges and fitting them perfectly to this particular team of oxen.

*That's* the yoke Jesus invites us to take. Don't be misled by the term "easy" in our translation. The root word in Greek speaks directly to this concept of a tailor-make yoke. The Greek word is better translated as "well-fitting." Jesus invites us to take his yoke upon us, the yoke which brings rest to weary souls, and the one which is made *exactly* to our lives and situation.

The yoke of Jesus, the yoke he invites us to wear, fits us well. It does not rub, or cause us to develop sore spirits. His yoke is always designed for two. And the partner who will wear the yoke with us is none other than Jesus himself.

The message I want you to hear this morning is that Jesus Christ *wants* to shoulder our burden. Running throughout all of the New Testament is this theme that ours is a burden-bearing Lord.

First, I would suggest that ours is a burden-bearing Savior who sets us free from the burden of sin. Secondly, I would suggest that ours is a burden-bearing Savior who wants to help us with the problems and challenges of life, and who will share them and help us carry them.

First, sin is a burden that weighs upon the soul. It is that burden which creates a sense that something isn't right. *That* something is called guilt and shame. We can pretend it isn't there; we can call it different things; we can even try to ignore it. Sometimes people try to medicate it away, either with prescription drugs or with street drugs.

But they cannot take away the burden of sin. Sin creates a burden in our conscience. It is the awareness in our inner being that all is not right with our soul. Actually, this isn't a bad thing – it is simply the symptom of our disease; we

call it sin. Guilt and shame are the natural consequences of sin; God designed us that way.

But God has also given us the cure for our disease. In Jesus Christ God has offered to the world not only forgiveness, but also immunity from prosecution. We have been set free. What a wonderful thing to celebrate this Independence Day weekend. Through Jesus Christ our sins have been forgiven and we have been set free.

Jesus Christ came to tell us he will share our burden. He will carry our sin-burden all the way to the cross. His yoke did not look like a traditional cattle yoke. It was in the shape of a cross. And so, Jesus shoulders the burden that you and I carry, a burden that is too heavy for any one of us to carry alone. Jesus, in offering his yoke to us, sets us free from the burden of sin. That's good news, don't you think? Amen? Amen!

But there is also another way in which we can understand Jesus helping to carry our burdens. And that is in the stuff of daily life. Many people believe that if there is a God, then God has checked out of human affairs and left us to carry on alone. God doesn't get involved in the small stuff of life, just the big stuff – like making the world and then bringing it to an end someday. They don't believe God gets involved in the small stuff.

But Jesus Christ, God's own son, came to earth to tell us and to show us - God *does* care about the little things that are going on. God wanted to communicate to his people that He does care, about each one of us. You see, if we hurt then God hurts. When we cry, then God cries with us. Jesus came to tell us and show us that God is a compassionate God, who cares for each one of us, all of God's people. All lives matter to God.

Jesus said, "Come unto me, ALL of you who are tired and weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." God and the Lord Jesus Christ do not expect

us to carry our burdens alone. God does not expect us, nor does he want us to have to deal with our problems all by ourselves. So, in God's mercy, God comes to our aid, often by sending people to help us.

I remember an old story about a little boy who was helping his Dad with yard work. His father asked him to pick up the rocks in a certain area of the yard. Dad looked over and saw his "little man" struggling to pull a huge rock out of the dirt. The little boy struggled, while Dad watched.

Finally the little boy gave up and said, "I can't do it." His father asked "Did you use all of your strength?" The little boy looked hurt and said, "Yes, Daddy, I used every bit of strength I've got." The father smiled and said, "No you didn't. You didn't ask *me* to help you. I'm on your team. Together we can do this." He then walked over and the two of them pulled that big rock out the dirt.

How many times have we tried to handle problems on our own? Exhausted, we may think we've used all of our strength, and we have nothing else to give. It's at this point; some people get angry and declare, "There is no God." But they haven't used all their strength. How do I know? Because they haven't asked their Heavenly Father to help.

I'm here this morning to tell you that God hears those prayers we utter and cry out in desperation. Very often, God reveals himself by sending another person to help us out – a friend, a neighbor, a family member, a church friend. It's been said that God has no hands but our hands; God has no feet but ours. Many times God is revealed in the help of another person.

Now, here are a couple of things you may not have heard before. Bear with me; there's a reason for telling you these odd facts. Did you know that if you put a buzzard in a pen that is 6ft x 8ft and is entirely open at the top, the bird, in spite of its ability to fly, will be an absolute prisoner? The reason is that a buzzard always begins a flight from the ground with a run of 10 to 12 feet. Without space

to run, as is its habit, it will not even attempt to fly, but will remain a prisoner for life, in a small jail with no top to it.

Second odd fact: the ordinary bat, the kind that flies around at night and chases insects in the air – did you know that it cannot take off from a level place? If it is placed on the floor or flat ground, all it can do is shuffle about helplessly until it reaches some slight elevation from which it can throw itself into the air. Then, all at once, it takes off like a flash.

And third odd fact: If you drop a bumblebee into an open tumbler, it will remain there until it dies, unless it is taken out. It never sees the means of escape at the top, but persists in trying to find some way out through the sides near the bottom. It will seek a way where none exists, until it completely destroys itself.

Why did I tell you these odd facts? - because in many ways, we are like the buzzard, the bat and the bumblebee. We struggle with all of our problems and frustrations, never realizing all we have to do is look up. Jesus wants us to look up to him for help with our problems. Sorrow looks back, worry looks around, but faith looks up.

Jesus said, “Come unto me, all you who are weary and carry a heavy burden. I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” God is always there for us, but we have to call Him. **Let us pray:** “Almighty God our heavenly Father, thank you for your love and care and concern. Thank you for sending people our way when we need a helping hand. May we not be too proud to accept their offer, for in doing so, we may be turning from you. Thank you for your love; we pray in Your Name. Amen