

July 9, 2023

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Matthew 11:25-30

At that time Jesus exclaimed, "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Background:

The first part of this text, verses 25-27, is also found in Luke's Gospel. (Luke 10:21-22) Therefore, scholars believe that it comes from an earlier source that both Luke and Matthew used as they composed their Gospels. The style of the text is different from that found in most of the synoptic Gospels. It is similar to the prayerful texts found in John's Gospel. The second part of this text is unique to Matthew.

In the second half of last week's Gospel Jesus spoke of the rewards for those who receive the apostles that Jesus sent to proclaim the reign of God. In the last verses, he referred to those apostles as "little ones." "Whoever gives only a cup of water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple—amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward." In today's Gospel Jesus describes true wisdom not being revealed to the wise and learned but to the childlike. Later in the Gospel Matthew will record Jesus instructing that in order to enter the kingdom of heaven one must "turn and become like children. (Matthew 18:3)

The religious leaders of the day were believed to be those who had studied and were considered authorities on their religious history and tradition. They prided themselves on their knowledge and interpretation on what was required to maintain a solid relationship with Yahweh. Their understanding led to a belief that one needed to maintain daily rituals that few could maintain.

Jesus for his part recognized the impossible burden that religious leaders of his day placed upon people if they desired to live faithfully as God's people. Jesus calls people to see the loving and merciful God of the covenant whose burden is light by contrast to that of the religious leaders of his day. The religious leaders for their part reject Jesus' teaching and see him as a threat to authentic religious heritage.

Reflection Questions:

1. Take some time to make two lists side by side. On one, list the qualities of the wise and clever, and on the other list the qualities of the childlike. Can you recall moments in your life when the qualities of one side seemed to dominate your relationship to God?
2. Jesus describes his relationship with the Father as intimate and exclusive. How do you respond to this description?
3. What are the burdens of your life? What are the burdens in your relationship with God?
4. What happens within you when you praise God?
5. Jesus talks about God as having "hidden these things from the wise and the learned," yet revealing them to "the childlike." How do you find yourself responding?
6. In the Gospel Jesus invites everyone to come to him and take on his yoke. How do you find yourself responding to his invitation?

7. In the Gospel Jesus talks about God's relationship from different perspectives. Can you take time to talk with God about that part of this Gospel that invites you into a deeper relationship with God, yourself, and others?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to fr.paul.gallagher.ofm@gmail.com.

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fsccl-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the Readings for July 9, 2023, the Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Thus says the Lord: Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king shall come to you;
a just savior is he, meek, and riding on a colt, the foal of an ass.
He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem;
the warrior's bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations.
His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.
I will extol you, my God and King, and every day will I bless you and praise you.
The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.
The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.
Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord, and let your faithful ones bless you.
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.
The Lord is faithful in all his words and holy in all his works.
The Lord lifts up all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

Brothers and sisters: You are not in the flesh;
on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.
Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,
he will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you.
Consequently, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die,
but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

At that time Jesus exclaimed: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."
"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart;
and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Excerpts from Zechariah 9:9-10; Psalm 145:1-2, 8-14; Romans 8:9, 11-13; and Matthew 11:25-30

From Joe:

Friends,

Here (attached) are the Gospel background and reflection questions for July 9th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the Gospel from Matthew, after giving praise to the Father, Jesus tells the people, "No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him. Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Learn from me. I am meek and humble of heart; my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

The other readings also have references to meekness and humility, alongside compassion, justice, and peace. In the first reading from Zechariah, (reminiscent of Palm Sunday) the just savior king shall enter Jerusalem on the foal of an ass, "and he shall proclaim peace" to the nations. Psalm 145 sings praises to the Lord, who is "compassionate toward all his works; he lifts up all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down." In the second reading, from the letter to the Romans, Paul writes, "You are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you, and the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also. We are not debtors to the flesh."

In the very first verse of today's Gospel, Jesus adds to his praise of the Father, "You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and you have revealed them to the childlike." In the context of this Gospel text, it can be understood that the "burdened" bear the weight of the law as interpreted and complicated by the "wise and learned" scribes and Pharisees. Their yoke is a labor. The light burden of Jesus' teaching, in contrast, is revealed to even (and especially) the childlike. Whoever Jesus wants to reveal the Father to will find rest in the Father's revelation by taking on Jesus' easy yoke.

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!