**Year A – Seventh Sunday after Pentecost**

**Matthew 11:25-30**

**July 23, 2017**

The Yoke’s On You

1. Designed for small children (Vv. 25,26)
2. Distributed solely by Jesus (V27)
3. Delightful to wear (Vv 28-30)

Introduction

“The joke’s on you!” the cocky young boy retorted to his friend. He and his friend had gotten caught up in a game of practical jokes, and now he thought he had finally gotten his buddy back. He just laid the bomb that would end the prank war for good, or so he thought. After matching each other tit-for-tat, putting rotten food in each other’s lunches, whoopee cushions on each other’s seats at school, fake spiders and rubber snakes in each other’s backpacks, he had done something unmentionable that should put an end to all this. Little did he know, his friend was plotting an even bigger joke.

“Sorry friend, I guess the joke’s on you,” the auto mechanic said to his customer. The man had fallen in love with a car that he found online. It was a beautiful car at an astoundingly low price. He decided to buy it sight-unseen, without taking it to a mechanic first. The price was so low that it had to be too good to be true. As it turned out, it was. In his first year of owning the car, the man ran into a laundry list of things that needed to be replaced on the vehicle, and it was costing him a fortune. “Never again will I make such a dumb purchase,” the man said under his breath. “The joke’s on me.”

“The joke’s on you, Christian girl!” The science professor remarked to the college student. The professor had a long list of degrees and pieces of paper to show how smart he was. And in his great amounts of learning, he had learned that there is no way a God could exist. Or so he thought. At any rate, he never missed an opportunity to talk condescendingly to anyone in his class that dared to be an open Christian. The Christian woman he had just mocked started to wonder, “Who is right here? God’s Word or my professor? Is the joke really on me?”

Today we praise our Lord because, as we will see, the joke isn’t on us. But something far different is on us—and it is a blessing in disguise. The *yoke* is on us. How can a yoke possibly be a blessing? We will answer that today. And we enjoy the facts today about this yoke—that it is a yoke designed for small children, one distributed only by Jesus, and it is a yoke that is delightful for us to wear.

Setting the Scene

When we study the Word of God, we study it in its context, like we do with any other book. When it is read in context, it is easy to understand. When passages are taken out of context, it becomes difficult, and many false teachings arise. Today’s selection from Matthew 11 takes place after Jesus had instructed his twelve disciples and sent them out on their first mission calls. While they were gone, he continued to teach the people in Galilee. While he was teaching them, he slowly discovered that many Galileans were treating him like a circus who had come to town. They wanted to see his miracles, yet still didn’t believe that he was the Savior who had been promised.

After all of that, many messengers of God would have been tempted to quit. If after all of his miracles and teachings, so many people still rejected him as Savior and so few believe, what hope is there that the masses will be converted and follow Him? And perhaps we have grown discouraged in similar ways in our ministry of the gospel.

But Jesus doesn’t grow discouraged. In fact, he praises God that God in his mercy and love had provided a way to overcome humankind’s natural rejection of God, and enlighten even one sinner.

Part 1: Designed for small children (Vv25,26)

Our lesson begins again with Jesus’ word of praise, “At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.’”

What does Jesus mean here when he says that the saving gospel has been hidden from the wise and learned and has been revealed to little children? Think about the college professor example that I mentioned earlier. Many so-called wise and learned people with a great amount of education grow arrogant in their human reason and so reject the God who created them and saved them. And why is that? Because it doesn’t make sense to their human understanding. Why would a God create a world? Why would he give free heaven to all who believe? Why would a loving God allow people to go to hell? Such questions cannot be answered by human reason; they can only be answered by God’s Word. And where human reason is idolized over and above God’s Word, it isn’t long before God’s Word is rejected. And so, we often see many of the wise and educated reject God because he doesn’t make sense to them. It happens in our day, it happened in Jesus’ day, it has happened since the fall into sin.

That isn’t to say that an education isn’t important, and that there won’t be many well-educated people in heaven. There certainly will be. But let us never idolize our own limited human intelligence over God’s infinite intelligence and his Word. His Word is so simple that it seems designed for small children! And it is! The Holy Spirit can and does work saving faith in the hearts of anyone, literally anyone! From the one-week-old baby to the world-renowned scientist to the elderly person in the nursing home with severe dementia. Faith does not rely on the intelligence of the person. No, faith is simply a gift of God, and this saving message has been preached to the ends of the earth.

And so let us not grow discouraged as we live in a society where true Christianity seems to be declining, and human reason seems to be idolized more and more. Rather, let’s do what Jesus did when he faced the very same problem. Let’s join in thanking our Heavenly Father that the saving message of the gospel has been revealed to all, and that he saves any sinners at all, including us! Let’s join in thanking God that no matter your level of intelligence, or your walk of life, or whoever you are, he has called *you too* to belong to his family. That Jesus sacrificed himself for *you*. That *your* sins are paid for, and *you* have no need to fear anything, not even death! That *your* death on earth is just the gateway to *your* eternal life, won for *you* by Jesus. No. Matter. Who. You. Are.

Part 2: Distributed solely by Jesus (V27)

And your salvation is given to you by Jesus and Jesus alone. As he says in the following verse, “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Everyone is born into this world with a natural knowledge of some sort of God. The fact that I have a brain that is communicating with my fingers right now, telling them to move, is amazing. Someone with infinitely greater wisdom than me had to design that. The fact that the mixture of gases in our atmosphere is just right, that if they were off by a percentage point or two, life on this planet would cease to exist, is amazing. Someone had to design that. The fact that all people, even unbelievers, have a general knowledge of right and wrong shows that God’s law is indeed written on our hearts. Someone greater than us had to put it there. All are born with a natural knowledge of some sort of god.

And so throughout world history, we see people worshipping gods of all sorts. These days, we see people worshipping success, or scientific discovery, or whatever the case may be. They are still putting their trust in something they feel is greater than them. So where is the answer?

Well, Jesus says “no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Want to know about God? Look to Jesus. True God and true man, he showed himself to be God by rising from the dead. He sent his Holy Spirit upon his disciples to bring the saving message to the world. He has preserved His Word throughout the generations so that even we in our world can hear his Word 2,000 years later. It has been translated into every language imaginable, has been preached on every land at some point in history, because he wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth! And so Jesus has even chosen *you*, yes *you,* to hear his gospel message and believe it. All knowledge of God is contained in his Word, and it’s abundant! So there is no need to look anywhere else if you are looking for God. Don’t look to how you feel, because human emotions are fleeting and can lie to you. Don’t look to modern philosophies or scientific theories for knowledge of the true God, because they are constructed by sinful humans. Look to the Word of God and it alone. He has told us all we need to know about him and our salvation in his Word. And Jesus has made sure that it was distributed to….you. What a loving God he is!

Part 3: Delightful to wear (Vv28-30)

And as if knowledge of God and salvation aren’t enough, Jesus also helps us in every single trouble. He says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Cast all your cares on Jesus. Come to him in prayer. Hear his precious gospel that you are forgiven and loved by God. We need to hear it every day, because every day Satan tempts us to believe it isn’t true, that God doesn’t love us. But in his Word we hear the precious truth. You are God’s own child, and you are an heir of your eternal home because Christ won it for you on the cross.

Finally, Jesus gets into the yoke today. He says, “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.” The Old Testament laws of Moses were a daily burden. They regulated everything the Israelites did throughout their days, the sacrifices they had to bring, the ceremonies for cleansing they had to do. In a sense, they were like a burdensome yoke. Perhaps you have seen a yoke, with two pails of water on either side, being put around someone’s shoulders to bear a load. And our lives on earth as Christians sometimes feel like a heavy burden.

But Jesus tells us he is yoked with us. Two oxen or beasts of burden would be yoked together and would pull the farming equipment, thus making the job easier than it would have been for one ox. If two oxen can help each other by being yoked together, how much more can the Lord of heaven and earth help us through our toilsome lives! He tells us in his Word that he is with us to the very end of the age. He tells us he is close to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit. He tells us his love for us never changes, that he is the same yesterday and today and forever. If he has led thousands, perhaps millions of his people through this life and into eternal glory, he will certainly yoke himself to us as well and lead us onto glory!

And so, my friends, the yoke is on you. But it’s not a burdensome one; it’s one that yokes us to our Savior. Our Savior who carries our burdens, lightens them for us through his Word and precious promises. It’s given to us through faith, a faith so simple that it’s even designed for children. It’s distributed solely by Jesus. Look no further than the Word of God for help and assurance. And it’s delightful to wear. Here we praise and thank our Lord for this delightful hope and guidance he gives us now and for eternity. Amen.