

## Homily for the 4th Sunday after Trinity

This morning I am looking at Matthew 11:28 to 30

I rather like this version:-

*"Are you having a real struggle?*

*Come to me!*

*Are you carrying a big load on your back?*

*Come to me!*

*I'll give you a rest!*

*Pick up my yoke and put it on; take lessons from*

*me,*

*I'll be gentle with you!*

*The last thing in my heart is to give you a hard*

*time.*

*You'll see - rest you need, and rest you shall have.*

*My yoke is easy to wear, my load is easy to bear."*

*(Note not a translation)*

To me this reading is for all of us who have ever felt overwhelmed!

I wonder do you fit into this category?

The Pharisees had talked about the people being called to carry the yoke of the Torah that meant living by the heavy weight of the Jewish law.

It's not surprising all those commandments weighed them down.

They were burdened by sin. You could say they were constantly living with the consequences of sin and according to the Pharisees there was no way of lifting that burden.

So the people were constantly living in the darkness of their sin - or so the Pharisees claimed.

No wonder they felt down trodden.

But here is the difference; Jesus was talking about a very different yoke. This yoke was about him and because of that it was based on love and on mercy.

Jesus says:- "My yoke is easy!"

But how can that be because we know there are other sayings of Jesus that don't make it sound quite so easy:-

Remember the eye of the needle and what about leaving behind family and friends?

None of these seem easy!

I think, Jesus is talking about something else here.

\*Perhaps he is talking about his gentleness and warmth.

\*Perhaps he is talking about the rest and joy to be found in knowing him.

\*Perhaps he is telling us that his role is not like a policeman.

Waiting for us to do something wrong.

\*Perhaps he is telling us that he is here to welcome us home.

\*Perhaps he is offering salvation to those who turn to him.

If that is the case we can say his yoke is easy because it is achievable whereas the Pharisees

yoke was always going to be impossible to achieve.

Jesus promises us that if we follow him he will never burden us with more than we can bear.

He promises us that he will work with us because we can't do his work without him.

With Jesus there is work to be done but we can rest assured that we are in safe hands and we will be guided onto the right path.

It seems to me the first step to finding the peace and reassurance that Jesus promises is to lay down our burdens in his presence.

Jesus says:-

*"Are you having a real struggle? Come to me!*

*Are you carrying a big load on your back? Come to me!*

*I'll give you a rest!*

*Pick up my yoke and put it on; take lessons from me, I'll be gentle with you! The last thing in my heart is to give you a hard time.*

*You'll see - rest you need, and rest you shall have.*

*My yoke is easy to wear, my load is easy to bear."*

If we were in church I would ask you to write down your worries - your burdens. We would then hand them over to God in prayer and then privately drop them into a flame.

Symbolically we would be handing them over to God and we would be leaving them with God.

I know that's not easy but by burning them we

wouldn't be able to pick them up again.

My mum had a great way of handling things she couldn't cope with. She would, in her mind, put anything that worried her into a box and then leave it on a shelf. She was able to forget anything that she didn't like. (I guess there must have been a long line of boxes - perhaps one labelled Stephen!)

I don't recommend this to you but there is something in handing over our worries to God and leaving them with him and then resisting the temptation to take them back. (Easier said than done!)

I would then have asked you to pick up a candle in exchange for your burnt burden as a sign of your prayers.

When we come to Jesus we lay down our burdens so that our hands are free to carry the light of Jesus into the world.

And that is what we would have done!

Gentle Lord, take our burdens from us so that we may walk in your footsteps with a light heart.

Amen.

Revd. Stephen