

Year A

Zechariah 9:9-12

Psalms 145:8-15

Romans 7:15-25a

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Sunday Closest to July 6

Good morning everyone,

It's always nice to see you all!

I hope you were able to stay cool this week.

You know when you search something, and now all your ads online are centered around that one thing?

First, off. I hate that. Super creepy.

Secondly, it should know that I'm not a farmer so giving me a bunch of websites to buy yokes from is not doing anyone any good. But there are some wood workers out there making great stuff.

So yes, I spent some time researching yokes this week.

And I want to clarify what we're talking about.

Yokes are placed upon the shoulders of an animal to help plow the field.
We're not talking about an egg yolk.

every time I had previously thought of a yoke, particularly in this passage, I thought of it in an individual context.

That I was having a yoke placed upon my shoulders, alone.

And that it was my burden to carry alone and I made the decision which yoke I was going to move forward with.

You know what I learned about yokes?

More often than not, they're shared. Not individual.

Two oxen, side by side, going together, with one yoke.

Two oxen carry much larger loads than one as they share the weight.

They're able to go further and I'm sure they appreciate the company.

Farmers will often have one Oxen training another, to learn the route of the fields.

and Jesus says to us in this morning's gospel, "take my yoke upon you, and learn from me."

See, I don't think the MY in this part is referring to the idea that Jesus is the farmer who owns the land and is standing over us having us work the field. And that Jesus owns the yoke and he's placing it upon our shoulders.

I don't think that is right.

I don't think the dual nature of the yokes is referring to marriages or dating either.

The yoke Jesus is referring to is that ministry that He is currently under taking. Bringing good news to those on the margins, reminding them of their citizenship to the Kingdom of Heaven.

And that their citizenship extends from sea to sea to the ends of the earth, because the earth is the Lords.

What we're invited into in this gospel reading is to join Jesus in the yoke, to have Jesus be our guiding oxen and continue the ministry of Christ in the world, now.

To have God the Father be the good farmer who created the land and graciously invites us to participate in this good life with the Son.

To take the journey of life, with Jesus. Learning from Jesus. Side by side.

Sharing the weight of the work with the one who knows the land the best.

Trusting that the Holy Spirit is doing the work of nurturing what has been tilled behind us.

and thanks be to God for the gentle and humble in heart guide we have in this life. Because as I continue to advance in my young adulthood I'm realizing more and more that there is nothing gentle about an interest rate.

I know, imagery for the Trinity can be tricky for any theologian. It's always imperfect.

but I think it helps clarify for us how we can understand the proximity of Christ as we live out our belief in the Good news of Jesus Christ.

And that's why I think this good news is missed by those who're considered "wise"
The wise don't receive this message because it's not simply another idea to learn, it's a new way of life.

This invitation to discipleship is more than cognitive learning or overcoming a gap in knowledge, what we're learning from Jesus is the adoption of a way of life that is expressed in terms of doing and being something in relation to the ministry of Christ.

Who guides us towards rest with an easy yoke and a light burden.

And while it sounds great on paper. It is not an intellectual exercise.

And sometimes our fear of changing yokes gets in the way.

Sometimes our fear of what others may think as we begin anew our walk with Jesus may slow us down.

And the truth is, and we see it in the reading, is that the world will use anything against you to try and keep you in a certain social spot, a certain mental space, in order to make you believe that you're unable to make the change that you want for your home, your life, your community.

That the healthy and whole life that is found with Christ, is better off to be purchased, it's easier when it's bought from the super market.

Look at what they said about John.
Look at what they said about Jesus.

They found any reason they could to criticize them, just for living their life differently. For following the calling that God had put on their lives.

When you live your life with Christ as your guide you're going to live differently than those around you, and they may have something to say about it.

And they say it to remind you of what they put on you, To try and keep you under their yoke. Their idea of who you should be.

And they're willing to place that yoke on you and let you do your absolute best to carry the weight of their expectations for you.

And they'll let you.

But the yoke of Christ is different.

It guides us to green pastures, still waters and rest for our souls. It has different priorities. It has a different understanding of who our neighbors are. A different way of knowing justice and reconciliation. a reality made known through real acts and experiences of repentance and redemption.

The relief Jesus brings is not freedom from all obligations and accountability. It is a promise of a way that brings freedom—a life of connection to God, and rest for our souls.

and What a gift it is to have your burdens released from the tension of your shoulders. What a gift rest for our souls truly is.

yes the good news is the empty tomb and the resurrection on Easter sunday.
Yes the good news is the invitation to eternal life.

And the good news is also, that the yoke of Christ is light. That the work is shared. And there's space to learn.

And that we will be guided to where there's rest for our souls.

That is good news too.

Amen.

