

## Worship at Home for July 5 2020

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:  
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In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

### Centering Prayer

Settle your Spirit on us today, Creator God –  
as gently as the butterfly lands on the milkweed,  
as tenderly as the lilies bloom,  
as lightly as the summer breezes move the grass.  
Amen

Opening Music:

### Opening Prayer

God of our days and nights,  
our joys and sorrows,  
our missed opportunities and our deepest revelations,  
today we come with our burdens and our weariness.  
Today we come to a time of worship that still doesn't feel 'normal'.  
Be with us as we read and ponder, as we listen to music  
or to the sounds of your creation.  
Stir in us a desire to seek you,  
a willingness to find you,  
and a readiness to turn our lives to you.  
we pray in the name of the Beloved, Chosen One.  
Amen

### Scripture Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30 *The Inclusive Bible*

"What comparison can I make with is this generation? They are like children shouting to others as they sit in the marketplace, 'We piped you a tune, you wouldn't dance. We sang you a dirge, but you wouldn't mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He is possessed.' The Chosen One comes, eating and drinking, and they say, 'This one is a glutton

and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners.’ Wisdom will be vindicated by her own actions”

Then Jesus prayed, “Abba God, Creator of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever, you have revealed them to the youngest children. Yes, Abba, everything is as you want it to be.”

Jesus continued,

“Everything has been handed over to me  
by Abba God.

No one knows the Only Begotten  
except Abba God,  
and no one knows Abba God  
except the Only Begotten –  
and those to whom the Only Begotten  
wants to give that revelation.

Come to me,  
all you who labour and carry heavy burdens,  
and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon your shoulders  
and learn from me,

for I am gentle and humble of heart.

Here you will find rest for your souls,  
for my yoke is easy  
and my burden is light.”

*When I read this scripture, particularly the last verses, music from Handel’s “Messiah” immediately fills my mind. The gentle and floating melody of ‘Come Unto Me’*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTMrCV58DZc> seems to match the gentleness with which

Jesus invites us to discipleship. The lightness in the music of the following - “His Yoke is Easy”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaLOC74TVMQ> seems itself to symbolize just how light the yoke of Christ could be. Handel has made musical theological statements about these verses in the melodies and rhythms he has created – or at least given us his opinion about them.

### Reflection

Images flow through this scripture passage today – children playing and no one responding, John the Baptist dressed in scratchy clothing, Jesus at table with friends and family, the idea of an individual bent over with the burdens of life, and a yoke. They seem such an odd collection for us to think about. Yet perhaps that is the point – we encounter and know God in very different ways throughout our lives. There are times when we do not ‘hear’ God, periods when we reject the mystery of the prophet from the desert, instances when we discard the radical welcome of Christ. Yet we are called to rest, to be unburdened by Christ, to take up work that will lift us up and give us faith and deeper relationship with the One who calls us.

In our lives we have all carried or are carrying burdens. Grief is both a journey and a heavy weight, illness can be an encumbrance, carrying troubles and worries wear us down. The burden of these peculiar pandemic times may be felt as frustration, boredom, isolation, loneliness. The work of being the hands and feet of Christ in the world is tiring; the work of justice-seeking in God's name can exhaust us.

Sometimes we need rest.

Rest from the anxiety that this pandemic too easily causes. Rest from the bombardment of bad news. Rest from isolation. Rest from worry. Rest from thinking we are not doing enough. Rest from ...

*Can you name something you need to rest from right now?*

Come to me, says Jesus, and I will provide that rest. I will hold you, I will watch over you. I will be with you. Leaning on God – in Christ, in Spirit, in whatever way we know or encounter God - can give us rest, can give us a respite from the worries of the world, and those we hold in our hearts, even when we know that we will be asked to take up a yoke.

A yoke, in my mind, always seemed to be a cumbersome thing, hardly conducive to 'easiness' or 'lightness' as Jesus describes – until I spoke with a farmer who still used them in plowing competitions. When compatible animals are yoked together, they can accomplish so much more than any individual animal. When we are 'yoked' to Jesus, and to one another in God's work, the burdens are indeed lighter, and we may find the rest in one another and in Christ that we need.

Music:

Prayers of the People *Our focus for this week's 'A Bite from the Apple' podcast was love, and these prayers were written particularly for that theme.*

God of Love, who has created us to give and receive all the blessings of love in all its forms, we thank you for this gift. We thank you for the strong love between family members, and for the affection we share with our friends.

We thank you for the love we feel for your creation, for fragrant blooms and shade-providing trees, for the feel of a summer breeze on our skin, and for the sound of waves lapping on a shoreline.

We thank you, God, for the fierce and passionate love we have experienced with our life partners, and the gentle love we have shared with our children, our grandchildren, our nieces and nephews, and other children who have been in our care.

We thank you, God, for your abiding, comforting, grace-filled love for us all. We thank you for the love of Jesus as we have known it in our lives.

We know, God, that there are some people who feel unloved in their lives, who have

experienced only pain from relationships that should be full of love, and abuse instead of affection. We offer our prayers for them all.

We pray, God, for those who are lonely, those who are battling illness or waiting for test results, for those who are grieving a lost loved one, and we pray for all those who are struggling in this time of continued isolation and pandemic.

Remind us, God, of your unending love. Inspire us to love each other with the passion that leads to action, with the tenderness that leads to acts of compassion, with the patience that leads to transformation, and with the love of Christ as our guide. Amen

Closing music:

Blessing

Music