

## “Living Well” Devotionals

**Matthew 11:28-30** (*from the gospel for Sunday, July 5, 2020*)

*[Jesus said] “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 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.”*

One of the greatest mysteries of our Christian faith is the fact that God chooses to do nothing without us.

God—who has all the power and wisdom we could ever imagine...God—who is fully self-sufficient...God who doesn't really need us, nevertheless chooses to act alongside us, in partnership with us, always through us.

One of the most striking examples of this notion is found in the words of Jesus here in Matthew 11 when he says to his followers: *“Take my yoke upon you...for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

The startling image Jesus' words evoke here is the image of two oxen, joined together by a wooden yoke—a harness built for two! It's not that Jesus is so weary of pulling his load that he wants to shift all his burden over to us—but rather, in his yoke-built-for-two, Jesus wants us to join him.

Jesus and we are hardly “equally yoked,” though. Jesus always does the heavy lifting, thank God...but he really and truly wants us alongside him, doing what we can, with the gifts we've been given.

Being yoked with Jesus is the best place we could ever be. Being yoked with our Lord is another way of talking about our synod assembly theme, “Living Well.”

Living Well isn't about us, all on our own, exercising superhuman power over work that God shoves off on us.

Living Well is, instead, about Jesus taking us on as partners, yoke-fellows, doing God's work together. Or as our ELCA tagline puts it: *“God's work. Our hands.”*

Six weeks from Friday, hundreds of us across our Eastern North Dakota Synod will gather for an online synod assembly to do some critical work: embracing a mission plan for 2021, recommitting ourselves to walking together through our 195 congregations, and calling forth a new bishop to guide us for the next six years.

God, of course, could snap his fingers and take care of all of that in a flash.

But God chooses to work through our thoughts, words, deeds and even our votes!  
Our Lord Jesus prefers that we be yoke-mates with him here in Eastern ND: living in love as we serve, equip and challenge God's people.

Yoked with Jesus, we do our best work, never alone, always together. That's why, as we eagerly anticipate our synod assembly, we're reminding ourselves that **it takes all of us** to sense the Spirit's prompting, seek God's wise guiding, and follow Jesus' leading.

We act not alone but together: yoked with our Lord Jesus. And that, my friends is what Living Well looks like. In the name of Jesus. Amen.