

## Thought for the Day Thursday 9th March 2023



Matthew 11: 1-30 My yoke is easy.

“For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (verse 30).

Here is an encouraging thought as we journey through Lent! Much of what we can feel called to during this time might seem challenging to say the least - to take a long hard look at our lives and our relationship with God. But here is a lighter touch. Or is it?

The end of Matthew 11 has this passage starting in verse 25 where Jesus praises God fulsomely as only he can, given the intimacy of their relationship. Jesus is announcing God’s Kingdom and showing the signs of this in countless acts of healing, forgiveness and the offer of new life. Here is new hope for all people. And yet some are putting barriers in the way. Many of the religious leaders, even his own family and many ordinary people (see the rejection of Jesus in his home town in Matthew 13.) don’t see this hope. They have other agenda.

Jewish writings had for centuries spoken of the wisdom of the truly wise. For ordinary people this seemed very remote - the preserve of the elite and the very clever.

Yet Jesus shines a new light here. He says we need the mindset of a little child to know and love God. We come to God by living in his presence and listening for his voice - which is the meaning of a well lived Lent surely.

Jesus was acting as a window on to the living God - through him people were coming to see God as he really was.

This all builds up into verse 28 in Matthew 11. "Come to me," he says "all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." The Pharisees spoke sometimes of people being called to carry "the yoke of the Torah," the heavy burden of Jewish law. Jesus offers a different yoke from his mercy and love which is easy to bear.

And yet can following Jesus really be so easy? Does he not say that we should be prepared to leave behind family, possessions and even our own lives to follow him? Yes he does but then he really is that important. When our focus is on the way of Jesus we find a real balance in our lives.

In Lent we can make space to discern whether we have

this balance and to see what and who is blocking our spiritual paths. Jesus takes away the burdens imposed by others that are oppressive - the dead hand of the law - and offers what he has in himself to offer.

He offers us a way of welcome and acceptance for all who will abandon themselves to his mercy. This is an invitation which shows us the Father in a new way and encourages us to walk deeper into his loving and grace filled presence.

In Lent, as we pray, which blocks do we put in the way of God? What is tying us up in knots? Who is influencing us in unhealthy ways? Of what do we need to let go to embrace Jesus' offer of freedom and new beginnings?

I know your troubles, your failures and your tears:  
I know your heartache, your unspoken fears:  
I know the burden you've carried for years —  
And I will give you rest.

“My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

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