



BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

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"MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT"

Matthew 11:25-30

~ Brent Russell ~

Read Matthew 11:25-30

- Well known passage of scripture and comes from the lectionary for today
- Jesus as always is preaching to an **agricultural group** of people
- Simple, **rural farming folk** and so the illustrations he uses are always applicable to them
- Now if possible it is nice if we as preachers can use our own more contemporary illustrations but there are often none that can keep the original sense of the story
- **Jesus here talks about being yoked**
- A yoke being a **large wooden beam** that is strapped across the shoulders of two beasts, normally oxen
- The farmer **attaches his plough or wagon** to the yoke and the beasts pull it
- **We are all yoked one way or another**
- Jesus talks about **husbands and wives** being yoked together
- Two **equal partners** in life's labour together
- That is why tells us "**do not be unequally yoked to an unbeliever**"
- I believe that every one of us is **yoked in some way to someone or something**
- **The yoke is used by the farmer to control the beasts**
- To make **go**, to make them **stop** and to **steer** them
- **It has to do with influence on the actions of these beasts of burden**
- And for us and our human lives we too are **always under a yoke**
- There is always something that **controls, guides and influences** our lives
- Some yokes are **good**, some are **bad**
- **Some have the appearance of good but are not**

The (cruel 😊) yokes of the world

- **Yokes control us and the evil one has and will use various things to yoke us to him**
- **To get us under his control**
- **Sometimes these yokes may even have the appearance of goodness**

Yoke of religiousness

- Jesus speaks against the burdens placed on people by **religiousness**
- **Religion has such a negative connotation for me**
- It speaks of **man made rules and regulation** – controls put in place by people of power **to have power** over those under them
- **Burdens placed on people by other people – but in the name of God**

- **In Matthew 23:4 He says this about the Pharisees: "They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them."**
- For many people the church has been a **tool of evil** in burdening people with loads they should never have to carry

- Some have been hurt when healing has been prayed for but not received – and the burden is placed for the lack of faith or the sinfulness of the person
- 'God wanted to heal you but you **had no faith**'
- 'God wanted to heal you but your life is too **full of sin**'
- **And so people find themselves controlled by guilt unfairly placed there**

- **The church has placed burdens on people by being ungracious – by not being full of the grace of Jesus**
- **The church has made people suffer under a guilt that was not real**

- I was listening on the **radio last week to a preacher** who was stuck in that mentality
- This idea of laying on a **load of guilt**, condemnation and criticism
- That you had **better get your life right** or God will get you

- **No sense of the love, mercy and grace of a forgiving God**
- I was upset listening to Him – how are people supposed to love a God who is presented to them as a condemning, critical, legalistic ruler
- **Not a compassionate father who is slow to anger as Psalm 103 tells us**

- In **acts 15** some were saying that people had to be **circumcised to be saved**
- Peter responds to them: ***"Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?"*** ¹¹ ***No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."***
- All of these are yokes that evil has used to **trap people** under the guise of being good, even Godly
- **If you have burdened by something some church or church leader has placed on your life that was never placed there by Jesus then today is the day to throw it off**
- **For Jesus says by yoke is easy and my burden is light**
- He does **not condemn**
- He does **not load us with guilt**
- **There are many other yokes too that the world gets us to wear**
- Other yokes that will **continue to control our lives** until we take them off and follow Jesus
- Yokes that seem to be good, seem to be what we want but will burden us down and trap us

Yoke of self determination

- Perhaps one that we are seeing more and more of in our liberal society is the yoke of self determination
- This idea that I have the **ability to control my own life**
- **You will wear a yoke in your life – something will control your life**
- **And the lie of the evil one is that he will tell you that you have the ability to control your own life**
- **Independent of others** alongside you
- Independent of those over you – like **parents**
- **Even independent on God**
- When people seek this desire to have absolute control over their own lives they will soon find themselves yoked by the evil one
- **He is the father of lies and he will delude you into believing that you can operate entirely under your own control**
- **But you will soon find that the sin in your life will bring to your knees**
- **And you will be more yoked to evil than your own will**

- I was listening to **567** last week and there has been much talk about **drugs**
- 25% of **Noupoort** residents are from the Durbanville area
- There is another rehab in **Mozambique** 95% of residents are from the area
- **Tik** addiction is becoming the biggest problem in Cape Town

- **Young people believe the lie that they can control their own lives**
- And they find themselves **yoked to destruction**
- **It will happen to everyone of us in different ways**
- If we believe that we can operate under our own will
- **We will soon find that the sin that lives in us will yoke us to destruction**

- There are countless other yokes that we find around our necks
- **They are yokes that we have CHOSEN to put there**

- **Or yokes that have been put there by others and we have CHOSEN to hold onto**
- They will **destroy our lives**
- They will **trouble our minds and our spirits**
- They will bring us to point of **total collapse**

- **They are yokes of sin that will lead to death and destruction**
- We get trapped by sin and it **controls and directs our lives**
- Our thoughts, our actions, our reactions our words...

- **Jesus is calling you today "Come to me, my yoke is easy and my burden is light"**

The yoke of Christ

- I have been showing you that you **will wear a yoke in your life**
- Somehow somehow you will find something controlling your life
- **And you will be burdened and in need of rest**
- **And I invite you today to take off that yoke**
- **And to put on the one that Jesus offers**
- There is a **wonderful legend** concerning the quiet years of Jesus, the years prior to his visible ministry. The legend claims that Jesus the carpenter was one of the master yoke-makers in the Nazareth area. People came from miles around for a yoke, hand carved and crafted by Jesus son of Joseph.

When customers arrived with their team of oxen Jesus would spend considerable time measuring the team, their height, the width, the space between them, and the size of their shoulders. Within a week, the team would be brought back and he would carefully place the newly made yoke over the shoulders, watching for rough places, smoothing out the edges and fitting them perfectly to this particular team of oxen.

- Now it is a story and has little evidence to support it
- **The translation of the Bible we use tells us that the yoke Jesus offers is easy**
- But the word not helpful in English
- **We come Christ and we expect EASY lives and yet that does not happen**
- The word really means **well fitting – it fits comfortably**
- Come to Jesus and you will find that his yoke is well fitting
- **He will make life work for the best for you**
- You know the passage of **Romans 8:28 "All things work for the good of those who love the Lord"**
- **When you come to Jesus the yoke he will fit to you will FIT you well**
- It has been **designed for your life**
- It has been made by the master himself to **fit every nuance of your personality and every part of your character**
- **It is not always EASY but it is always WELL FITTING for you**
- It has been designed by your creator to **fit you down to the smallest detail**
- **The yoke of Christ comes with certain conditions though**
- **But they are not loads that will burden you**
- They are loads that are light and will bring freedom and rest for your souls

Christ takes control

- The language around being yoked is about control
- **Who controls your life?**
- I have already shared with you that we often allow ourselves unintentionally to be controlled by other forces in our lives
- **And the language Jesus has chosen to use here is that we need to allow him to take control**
- **To take his yoke is to allow him to steer, guide, direct and lead our lives to places we need to go**

- All these other things that yoke our lives drag us down, cause us pain and trouble
- **And Jesus call is "if you are weak and heavy laden come to me"**
- Come to me and **let me have control of your life** and I will lead you beside **still waters and green pastures**
- **Taking Jesus yoke is a place of humility and vulnerability**
- Sometimes those who are ready take the yoke of Christ have come there because they can finally do no other
- For us all there are times when **we know we should allow Jesus control** over things
- **but we don't allow Him, we want to keep control**

- Then we get to a point finally where all of these things in our lives all these forces pulling us this way and that eventually get us to a point of such desperation
- **A point where we are so weak and heavy laden that we fall to our knees and finally give control to Jesus**
- **It is a place of weakness and admission of needing Christ's control in our lives**

- **And it will become a place of power as we find it from Him**

You need to allow Christ to teach you

- **Jesus says in vs 29 "Learn from me"**
- Here is condition #2
- **You need to learn from Christ else you are going to conflict with Him**
- He wants you to learn His **patterns, His paths His ways of doing things**
- **We need to learn from Him in every aspect of our lives**

- **If we choose not to there is going to be some struggle**
- Do remember running a **three legged** race as a child
- When you had learned each other's stride you where fine
- But if one served or changed step you landed up in a tangle heap
- So it is with Christ **if we are to proud** to learn from Him
- **He will pull us gently left – Saying perhaps "Help this person"**
- **We will pull to the right – telling "Not now – I'm busy, perhaps tomorrow"**

- If we continue to **fight His gentle guidance** in our lives, we will before long we will find ourselves at a **standstill**
- **Conflicting so much with Him, that our spiritual growth will stop**

- **And should we pull in the wrong direction long enough and hard enough we my choose to take off His yoke**
- **And we will find ourselves once again bound to things that will control our lives and lead to destruction, damage and pain**

Conclusion - Christ will help you

- A yoke always speaks of **two animals**
- You would talk of a **yoke of oxen** – a pair of oxen who would work together
- And the truth of Jesus message to us is this
- **He will make a yoke to fit us well, comfortably – not always easy, but designed for who we are**
- **And the yoke has been designed for two**

- **And so Jesus himself promises to walk with us**
- Jesus promise to be **gentle** with us he will **not abuse** our lives
- He will **not force** us to do things we do not want to do
- **He may pull quite hard at times, so that we will follow him**
- **But he will never force us or beat us**

- **He promises to work and walk alongside us**
- He is **humble**, not a proud God
- **But a God who steps into mud alongside us to lift us up**
- To give us **rest and respite for the burdens of life** that so easily control us and weigh us down

- **When all else troubles us, worries us and makes us weak**
- **Jesus is saying give me control**
- **I will walk with you**
- **I will give you the strength you need**
- **And I will give you rest for your soul – safe in my hands for eternity**