

## Wednesday Home Study, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020

### Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

**Pray:** that the Holy Spirit will enlighten your mind and give you understanding as you study God's word. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to discern and hear any special message that God has for you this day.

#### **Read Matthew 11:16-19:**

*16 "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 17 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'*

*18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; 19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."*

There is a growing rift between Jesus' form of ministry and that of his cousin, John the Baptist.

1. What do you see as the difference between John's form of ministry and Jesus' form of ministry?

John's message focused on repenting to avoid God's wrath. At this point, John has withdrawn into the wilderness and was living as an ascetic.

Jesus did at first tend to make repentance his main emphasis, like John. But now this has changed – he mingles with people in villages and cities, he reaches out to people, heals, comforts and even fellowships with those seen as 'sinners'.

2. John sees God as a God of wrath. What characteristic/s of God does Jesus centre at his message?

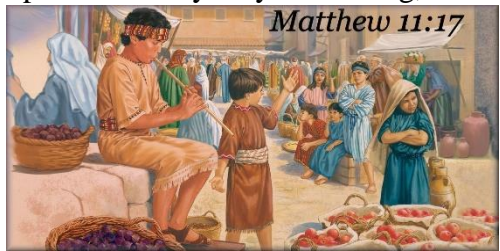
John begins to question why Jesus' form of ministry is different. He sends his disciples to ask Jesus if he really is the Messiah.

Jesus reflects on the irony that John was criticised for his fasting, while Jesus is criticised for feasting with outcasts (vv.18-19).

3. Why do you think this was so?
4. How does your response compare with Jesus' statement in v. 16?

Jesus had been traveling around the province of Galilee teaching and proclaiming his message. But the response to his message was, frankly, very discouraging.

In verse 16b, Jesus compares the Jews to the children playing games with one another in the market square where stall holders are busy trying to sell their wares while children, seemingly oblivious to what is going on around them and the disruption that they may be causing, are calling out to one another. The Jews had failed to recognise both the prophet who heralded the coming of the Messiah, John the Baptist, and the Messiah himself, Jesus.



5. The messages of both John and Jesus were rejected as indicated in verse 17 which uses images drawn from a wedding and a funeral. Can you see how these images apply to Jesus and John?

- John the Baptist who lived a life of austerity and preached a serious message of warning was misunderstood – the text says, ‘*we wailed and you did not mourn*’.
  - Jesus, who mixed socially with the ordinary people and held out to them love, forgiveness and hope was rejected – the text says, ‘*we played the flute and you did not dance*’.
6. We might find some significance in Jesus’ use of an illustration from a wedding to apply to himself. Can you suggest why he might have chosen this image?

***Read Matthew 11:25-27***

*25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*

Despite his disappointment in the response of the Jews, Jesus gives thanks to his Father, God! But the English translation in verse 25 ‘*I thank you*’ just does not get across the extent of Jesus’ overwhelming joy and gratitude that is contained in the original Greek words.

7. From vv. 25-27, what do you think got Jesus so excited when he had just been reflecting on the rather discouraging results of his ministry?

Jesus tells us that we can only discover Jesus and the kingdom of God because God has chosen to reveal them to us. This is not something that we can do on our own, or through our own intellect. In fact, God

conceals such things from those who are worldly wise and reveals them to those who come with childlike trust and who are teachable.

8. Take a moment to reflect on the fact that you are included among those who have responded and therefore are among those who have caused Jesus such rejoicing. Rejoice with Jesus! Sing, dance, (let go of your inhibitions - we can't see you in your home.) 😊 Write a prayer or psalm of praise and thanksgiving ...

Jesus then continues to state what is possibly the most profound thing in the Bible. But before we consider that lets consider the image of the 'yoke'.

**Read Matthew 11:28-30**

*28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." NRSV*

This may at first appear to be contradictory. We are called to God when we feel weary and burdened; and then we are invited to put on a yoke!

9. How will Jesus' yoke ease or end our weariness and lift our burden?

A 'yoke' is the wooden collar that ran across the shoulders of the oxen and enabled them to pull heavy loads such as a plough. The term implies two animals working as a team. The stronger is paired with a younger or weaker animal to share its strength and take most of the burden.



10. When you read that ‘Jesus will give us rest’ do you think that this means that the Christian should have an easy life?

Unfortunately, we continue to live in a fallen world – a world where injustices and bad things happen to good people (including Christians). Life itself can be very burdensome and many of us are carrying burdens of past hurts, injustices, illnesses - and just plain old age!

Jesus was implying that his listeners, the Jews, were labouring to do the works of the Jewish law, and the Jewish teachers often apparently spoke of the ‘yoke of the law’. They had become heavy laden by the burdens that the Jewish scribes put on them in trying to live by the impossible rules that the scribes had developed around the Old Testament Law.

11. You and I do not have the Jewish law to try to follow; but there is a similar burden that many carry. Can you say what it is? If not, read Romans 7:14-19.

Jesus offers us relief from the burden of sin by taking on his yoke. Jesus’ yoke is different to the ‘yoke of the law’ because it is a yoke of love, not works.

12. Have you experienced moments when you have become aware of Jesus helping you carry a burden?

Now lets us return to what I see as possibly the most profound thing in the Bible. *Re-read v.27.*

In this passage Jesus tells us that if we come to God through him he can give us rest, because he is one with God.

There is a oneness in relationship between Jesus and God that we can only describe by the concept of the Trinity.

Only God the Father can fully understand Jesus. And only God the Son can fully know God the Father because he shares God's nature. And it is because Jesus Christ shares God's nature as well as our own that Christ is able to reveal God to us.

In this way Jesus provides a link between us and God. The way to know God the Father is through God the Son! Jesus expressed this same truth in John 14:6 when he said, '*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*'.

Perhaps we have in verse 27 a second reason for Jesus' joy and gratitude expressed in verse 25 – his consciousness of his oneness with God.

You and I are invited into this oneness – to share in this knowledge and love expressed in and through our Trinitarian God.

**Reflect** again on Andrei Rublev's painting of *The Trinity* that we examined in the study of 10<sup>th</sup> June.

**Pray and thank God** that you can know him and his love through the Trinity – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Rejoice** that Jesus shares your burdens.

