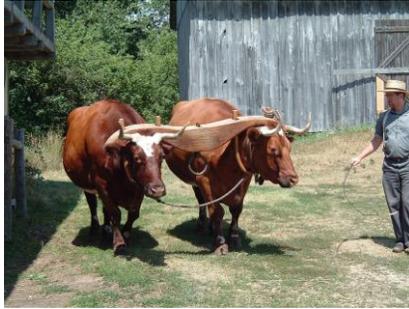


Coop's Scoops # 118: Sunday worship, July 4, 2021

Sentence: Blessed is our Father, Lord of heaven and earth, who has revealed these things to the simple.



Readings:

2 Samuel 7: 1-17 Psalm 89: 20-37 Romans 7: 14-25a

Collect:

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ has taught us that what we do for the least of your children we do also for Him. Give us the will to serve others as He was the servant of all, who gave up his life and dies for us, but lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 11: 25-30

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I thank^(a) 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.^(b) 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.

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."

Sermon:

It's always a good idea to read "before" the appointed Gospel reading to see what context Jesus is speaking from, and how that context can affect how we understand the Gospel. Today is no exception.

So let's back it up a bit. Jesus has just been talking to the crowds about John the Baptist, currently in prison for speaking the truth to Herod. John is described as the greatest man ever born...yet John is suffering from the rejection of his ministry. Jesus lists some cities who have also rejected the Gospel and failed to repent, despite His mighty acts of power. He is discouraged, and He is making it clear to the crowds that rejection of the prophets, and His disciples and He Himself will bring some judgement upon them. He is speaking soberly and with reference to suffering and rejection.

Then, not skipping a beat, He prays to God, saying "Father, I thank you for revealing truth and wisdom to the babes and infants, even while the wise and intelligent are rejecting it." Jesus is not referring to chronological age but rather their "newness" to spiritual things, or their "long-term traditions" about spiritual things. Jesus restates His own faith.... The Father has handed over all of Himself to Jesus, and Jesus knows the Father in ways no one else possibly could, and Jesus will reveal the Father to others according to God's gracious will.

This is what He reveals right after His prayer of thanks. He invites people to come to Him and become yoked to Him as He is yoked with the Father. Verses 28-30 are amongst the most quoted words in Scripture. They impact the soul of all who experience them in their own lives. To help us understand them just a bit better, perhaps, I am going to change the order a bit, and speak to series of words separately.

Jesus is concerned about those who are carrying heavy burdens.

*Are you? Carrying heavy burdens? Are they outside burdens or are they in your soul burdens? Paul knew about both... He suffered all sorts of calamities, and he also suffered from questioning his own faith. He says "When I want to do what's good, that's just when I do the things I hate. I can't understand myself....I do not do the good I want, but the evil, I do **not***

want is what I do.....He says he is wretched about it...a heavy burden for sure.

So Jesus says “Come”

He is telling us that if, like Paul, you are in turmoil, you can do something about it. You can leave where you are, and COME. Or you can worry, wallow, and try to be wise and fail. We need to cut that out and get busy with “coming” to Jesus.

Jesus says “To Me”

...not to the bank, or the shopping mall, or the bar, or the ice cream parlour....Jesus says “Come to Me”

Jesus says “I will give you rest”

That is a promise. But He won't be giving you a cozy bed, He'll be giving you something better...an easy yoke.

Jesus says “Take My yoke upon you”

What would Jesus yoke be? Well, He's told us in His prayer of thanks. He and the Father are yoked together working the Kingdom of God into the world. His says His yoke is easy? Really, with all the awful things that happen to Him? With what is still coming? “Easy” doesn't mean to 21 century minds what it meant to first century minds. To them, it meant “tailor made”. Yokes were common – they linked oxen- they could use a strip of bare and bent wood and usually did, but if they really loved their animals and wanted the best production, they measured each animals shoulders and took each one's weight into consideration, and wet down the wood until it was supple and fitted it perfectly unto each animal's frame. There would be no scars, or pain, or bruising for an ox with an “easy” yoke. The Father and Jesus were perfectly fitted...their will was one...their power was shared...and Jesus always credits the Father for giving Him power and courage as well as joy and love. Jesus is the arms and legs and tongue and will of the Father upon this earth. Perfectly yoked.

Jesus says “Learn from Me

Learning from Jesus is a process of responding, going where He goes, and cooperating with Him. Tugging, pulling, pushing can't work

anymore. You learn that you can't lead, and you can't lag behind, you are an "along-sider". What else will we learn?

Jesus says "Listen.... I am gentle and humble in heart"

When we listen, pay attention, we will learn that Jesus is the best possible One to be linked with. He is not bossy, He doesn't manipulate or abuse, He is gentle...and He is humble in heart. The best example of this humility is His choice of partners. His choice of who He wants to be with. The king of glory, the One who reveals the Father, the One who is exalted above all human beings and above all angels...that very One chooses you and me as yoke-mates. He no longer calls us servants, but friends. What will the result of all this learning be?

Jesus says "You will find rest for your souls"

Ah sweet rest!... no need for tossing and turning in the night, fretting about what we've done or what's been done to us. No plots for vengeance, no self-recrimination, no lashing ourselves with guilt, no hopeless despair, no tears that cannot be wiped away, no deep down fear of death....rest, peace, calmness, serenity, joy, contentment, love, all the wonderful "fruit" which grows in our souls when we are yoked with Jesus Christ.

Here is a challenge for this week. Try taking upon yourself the yoke of Jesus. You've maybe heard about putting on the armour of God...the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth...etc., but we also need to dress ourselves with the easy yoke. When we get up and shower and dress for our day, we can come to Jesus and slip into the yoke He has made just for us. We can pray something like this: "Lord, it's another day, and I have come to You! I want to slip into the yoke with you. I put it on willingly. I will be beside you. I will follow your lead, and obey the nudges of your Spirit in my heart. We enter this day as we will end it, Lord. Together, linked, partners, friends. Thank You for choosing me. You are counting on me, and I am counting on you. So off we go, Lord, down for breakfast and into whatever the day may hold. Amen. God bless us all on the journey!"

Prayer for our country on Canada Day weekend:

(Written by Alva Woods who is sharing her gift of intercessory prayer with us)

I'm praying that Canada will get back to God.

I'm praying the ongoing harm being done to First Nation Canadians will stop.

I'm praying for the ones who committed atrocities in the past and those who continue to do harm.

I'm asking God to fill the hearts of the perpetrators with remorse and apologize to God and their victims and the nation.

I'm praying for the lives lost needlessly and the ones who survived.

I'm praying for God to fill the living victim's hearts with love and hope in God and in the future.

I'm praying for all Canadians to recognize the tragedies of the past and present so they may put a collective stop to any and all future acts of hate.

I'm asking God to help all of us in Canada to return to what the entire world thought of us in the past.

We were respected as a good, kind, and welcoming people.

We were considered a diverse and generous population.

We were known as an apologetic nation. Our two most famous quotes were "I'm sorry" and Eh!"

Please, God, guide all Canadians to return to the caring and nurturing country that I know we can be.

Please show us how to right so many wrongs.

Please help us to see others as You see them. We look on the outward appearance and actions, but You look on the heart. Just as we should.

To You we are all equal. All of us worldwide need to learn that.

Amen

Blessing:

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace! - Judie+