

**Fr. Molison's** Sermon for Sunday, July 6, 2008  
Proper 9-A

Zechariah 9:9-12  
Psalm 145: 8-14  
Romans 7:21-8:6  
Matthew 11:25-30

A young woman brought her fiancée to meet her parents. After dinner, her father asked the young man into his study for a chat.

“So, what are your plans?” he began.  
“I’m a theology scholar,” the young man replied.

“Admirable!” the father said. “But what will you do to provide a nice home for my daughter?”  
“I will study and God will provide,” he explained.

“And how will you afford to raise children?”  
“God will provide.”

The men left the study and the mother asked her husband, “Well, how did it go?”

“He has no money or employment plans,” the father said, “But on the other hand, he thinks I am God.”

Picture a grandpa sitting in his favorite chair, and one of his grandchildren children is playing nearby. Grandpa says to the child, “Come here to me, little one, and I will give you a quarter.” (Use to be a nickel, but inflation you know.)

Now the responsibility for getting the quarter rests with the child. The child must initiate action, must initiate a response, by getting up and going to grandpa to receive the quarter. The child must make the move to go to grandpa to receive what was promised.

In our relationship with Jesus, we are to respond no less differently. If we truly want what is promised, then we need to go to Him! In today’s gospel passage from Matthew, Jesus is speaking to people who had as many serious problems facing them as we do. And just as He had comforting words for them, so are His words meant to be of comfort for us.

Jesus said to them, and is saying to us, “*Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*” This invitation of Jesus is known as the “Comfortable Words of Jesus.” Remember the “King James Version?” “*Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” Doesn’t that King James English sound good to hear once again? It does to me.

Now, what do such words mean? The very first word is of great significance. “**Come...!**” “*Come to me...*” This phrase, translated from Greek, was originally an expression peculiar to the Hebrew language. It is more closely interpreted to mean, “*Come, follow Me.*” Whichever is preferred, “*Come to me,*” or “*Follow Me,*” the message is clear. Jesus is not going to come to us! We are to go to Him! We are to follow Him! The initial action is ours. We must act. The grandchildren we are or were and who responded to our grandfather’s invitation received what was promised. So we are to respond to the invitation of Jesus to receive His promise, a promise worth much more than a quarter!

“*Come unto me...*” To come to Jesus requires spiritual effort. There needs to be thought, prayer, meditation, prayer, commitment, more prayer. And then, Jesus adds, “Come to me, **all** who labor.” A very gracious invitation, indeed. How many does Jesus want to go to Him? Just a select few? Jesus extends His invitation to all, to everyone; to you and to me. Sadly, tragically, not all will respond.

“*Come unto Me all who labor and are heavy laden...*” The Greek used for the phrase *heavy laden* literally means **being burdened**. It would seem that the phrase *being burdened* more accurately defines the message of Jesus. The people of Jesus’ time were groaning under the heavy and grievous burden of laws and traditions laid upon them by the Scribes and Pharisees.

To be burdened or heavy laden – all of us have heavy burdens to bear: pain; suffering; sickness; death of loved ones; temptation; sin; and many others that provide stress in our lives. The comforting thought is that to all such people, our gracious Savior calls.

And the promise received when we respond to His call? “*...and I will give you rest.*” “*And I...*” Jesus is saying that no matter what burdens we bear, He, and only He, can and will give us true rest. It is Jesus who will give us rest, true rest, a rest that gives peace to a weary heart, a rest that pardons sins; a rest that refreshes body and soul.

And what does Jesus invite us to do? *“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.”*

*“Take My yoke...”* Yoke? A Yoke is an instrument of work! Jesus said that by coming to Him that he would give us rest, and then he tells us to go to work! Precisely! The rest He offers enables us to be fit for work in His kingdom. His rest does not mean that we stop working, but rather enables us to work for the spread of His kingdom without being shackled by burdens this world lays upon us.

*“Take My yoke...”* Jesus is stating that there is work to be done. Therefore, enter into it! The image of the yoke completely and totally eliminates the idea that Christianity is a spectator faith. Remember the words of St. James, “Faith without works (faith without evidence of that faith, a faith without a response to Jesus) is dead.”

*“For my yoke is easy...”* The Greek term for *easy* also means *well-fitting*. In ancient Israel, ox yokes were made of wood. The ox was brought to a carpenter, measurements taken, and the yoke was crafted and carefully fitted to the ox. This was all done so that the new yoke did not irritate nor chafe the animal. There is a legend stating that Jesus made the best yokes in all of Galilee. It is said that the sign over His carpenter shop read, “My yokes fit well.”

The yoke of Christ fits very well enabling you and I to spread His Word. It fits well. It will not irritate nor chafe, physically or spiritually.

A man was carrying a heavy basket. His young son offered to help him. The father cut a large stick from a tree and placed it through the handles of the basket. The stick was placed so that its end facing the father was very short, while the end facing the son was four times longer. Each took hold of his end of the stick. The basket was easily lifted and carried quite well. The boy indeed was bearing the burden with his father, but he found his work easy and the burden light, because his father assumed the heavier end of the load. So it is with Jesus.

*“Come to Me...”* This invitation is lovingly extended to each and every one of us. His death upon the cross demonstrates the fullness of His love. We do not have to have the best things in life; we do not have to have great intelligence; we do not have to have great wisdom. Jesus calls us just as we are. He said that we will find Him among those gathered in His Name, in church, where brothers and sisters bear one another’s burdens, and pray for the whole body of Christ.

It is this passage that led Charlotte Elliot in 1836 to write the words to the now well-known hymn number 693, “Just as I am, without one plea...”

(10:00 Mr. Gamble, would it be possible to offer hymn 693 as a Communion hymn this morning? And when everyone has received their communion, then sing hymn 719, on our knees?)

When you come and kneel before the altar of God to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, ask Jesus to come into your heart; ask Jesus to share the burdens you may have; ask Jesus to give you rest of body and soul; ask Jesus to reveal to you how you may take up His yoke, His well-fitted yoke of discipleship and work for the spread of His kingdom.

And the people of God said, “Amen!”