

July 5, 2020

I've got a silly joke for you all. You know this morning's passage gives us a clue about what Jesus likes for breakfast, don't you? Jesus likes eggs over easy. After all, he says in today's passage, "For my yolk is easy." Ok, sorry. That deserves to be booed. Well, I am glad we are back together in worship, even though I knew our numbers would be light for worship. I am also, like many of you, worried and anxious about COVID-19. While things look ok in our county and in IL, we know that the rest of the country is looking pretty rough. So, Session is taking things slowly. We will add things and change things as we see fit over the next several weeks, so bear with me going forward. I've said this from the beginning of the pandemic, they didn't have a seminary class on how to pastor congregations during a pandemic. That being said, you can bet your bottom dollar they will soon. This hasn't been easy for any of us. People have gotten sick. People have lost their jobs. Others have had to work from home and try to watch their kids while working. People have died. A lot of people have died. This is not an easy time for us as a people right now. It is also the perfect time to hear this passage from the Gospel of Matthew.

I just love this passage from Matthew. It reminds us of the gentle strength of Jesus. Jesus is strong enough to carry our burdens while gentle enough to ease our struggles and hardships with love. It is important to note, however, that this passage does not imply that we should all just take it easy, put our feet up in the lazy boy and watch some tv. We are not excused from being the disciples called us to be. We still must do the work to which we have been called. As Elisabeth Johnson writes in her blog on the Dear Working Preacher website, "To take [Jesus'] yoke upon oneself is to be yoked to the one in whom God's kingdom of justice, mercy, and compassion is breaking into this world, and to find the rest for which the soul longs." We are called to work alongside Jesus as his justice and mercy and compassion breaks into this world. Those who work on a farm know that picking up Jesus' yolk means that we have work to do. And it may be hard work, changing the world, but we do not do that work alone. And the promised rest that Jesus offers us in this passage is the rest that comes when we've freed ourselves of the unnecessary burdens of greed and injustice and pride and all the stuff that gets in the way of doing the kingdom work of Christ.

Jesus calls us to the work of freeing people from the burdens that weigh them down. Jesus calls us in this passage to help set the prisoners free and to free the oppressed. We are called to do this work as disciples of Christ. And it should be noted that this work is not easy if we try to do it by ourselves. When you yoke yourself with someone else, your burden becomes less. When you yoke yourself with Christ, you no longer are doing the work of setting people free by yourself. The

work to which we have been called is to set people free, to liberate people from oppression and the burdens of life.

There is, of course, a lot of work for us to be doing, even in our own communities. People have lost their jobs and are struggling to keep their homes and put food on the table and pay the bills. People are working long hours in unsafe environments for low pay. People are locked in their homes because they are immunocompromised and are scared to go outside. We've got work to do here in Farmington, dear church. We can call on people we haven't talked to in awhile. We can drop off food for the hungry. We can sit out on the front porch and talk with people who are lonely...sick feet apart with masks on. We can help the food pantry restock their shelves. We can drop off food we made at someone's house. We can advocate for the poor and the oppressed in our communities. We can give out of our own pockets to help someone in need. There is so much work that needs to be done, people of God. The yolk may be light, and the burden lifted off our shoulders, but there's still work to be done. There are so many people who need help during this time. We can be the church by helping carry the load for other people as well, for that is the example that Christ sets for us in this morning's passage. So, let us pick up the yoke of Christ and get to work, beloved of Christ, because we are still called to be the Church during the COVID-19 pandemic.