4/20/20 This is the sixth in our series of devotions. Hear now this teaching from Jesus.

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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.” Matthew 11:28-30.*

Invitations are one of life’s joys. It’s always a nice surprise to be invited to a birthday party, an anniversary party, a graduation or a wedding. Jesus extends this gracious invitation *“Come to me!”*

*“All who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens!”*To be human is to carry burdens. We may carry different burdens and handle them in different ways, but they are real nonetheless. We think of burdens of guilt, stress, illness, pain, disappointment, failure, fear, loneliness, or a lack of purpose. Are you carrying a burden?

Jesus continues: **"***Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart."* Jesus, our Risen Lord offers support, encouragement and an opportunity to learn from him. Do you find it surprising that Jesus offers burdened people a yoke? When we are troubled, we need an escape, a holiday, a party, a break, not a yoke.

What does Jesus offer with this invitation? He offers to ease the strain of burdens, to shoulder their load, to release them, to come along side us. Nobody else can do that but Christ. Scripture says: "*Behold the Lamb of God who lifts up and bears away the sin of the world."*

Jesus offers us a new kind of yoke. Jesus is referring to a farm practice common in his day. A yoke is a piece of equipment that binds an ox to a plow. Whenever a young ox needed to be trained, he would be attached to the yoke of an older ox. The older ox would pull the yoke and the younger ox would follow in his footsteps, even though he wasn't actually pulling any of the load.

Jesus is saying: *“Yoke yourself to me. Let me help you carry the load and I will lead you and teach you how to live."* *"My yoke is easy and my burden is light*."

Je*sus concludes his invitation – “I will give you rest. You will find rest for your souls.”*What a comforting word - rest. Are you tired physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually? We need rest in life.

What does Jesus mean by "rest for your souls"? The Greek word here literally means “*an intermission.”* Jesus is saying accept my invitation and you will have an intermission, a respite, a reprieve, a break from life’s day-to-day struggles. You will experience spiritual renewal, refreshment, a time of peace.

It takes humility to say: Jesus I need your yoke, your power and strength.

I close with the translation from The Message. *“Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me, watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”*

God’s blessings be with you.

Rev. Alan W. Deuel