

July 6, 2008
“unforced rhythms”
Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30
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Matthew 11

11:16 "How can I account for this generation? The people have been like spoiled children whining to their parents,

11:17 'We wanted to skip rope, and you were always too tired; we wanted to talk, but you were always too busy.'

11:18 John came fasting and they called him crazy.

11:19 I came feasting and they called me a lush, a friend of the riff-raff. Opinion polls don't count for much, do they? The proof of the pudding is in the eating."

11:25 Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer: "Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You've concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people.

11:26 Yes, Father, that's the way you like to work."

11:27 Jesus resumed talking to the people, but now tenderly. "The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, coming out of Father and Son intimacies and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I'm not keeping it to myself; I'm ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen.

11:28 "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.

11:29 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.

11:30 Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

[The Message](#)

Many of us are familiar with the end of this passage of Scripture, in slightly different words, “come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”.

Yes, burdened.

Some of you have a parent in the land of Alzheimers. Some of us fight disease, prepare for surgery, are in recovery from painful surgery. Some of you are burdened by mental illness, or joblessness. Some of us are in the midst of grieving over the loss of loved ones in death, some are saying good-bye to jobs or friends because of a move. Some of you work long hours, support a growing family, hurry from responsibility to responsibility all day and all night.

Yes, weary and burdened.

What does it look like, what does it feel like, to be unburdened, to feel the “unforced rhythms” that Jesus speaks of?
What would it feel like to live, “freely and lightly”?

Do you think Jesus is naïve, 2,000 years too late, unable to compete with your anxieties, because you have a “Blackberry” harping at you, or you have two jobs, an old car, and expired auto insurance that you hope you never get caught with and fined for? He never had little kids with piano and soccer and camp? He never had to worry about such things...

Well, now I suggest we begin to sound like the whiny kids, from the beginning of this passage of Scripture! Discontented, self absorbed kids.

For Jesus **is** aware of the burdens; life was incredibly burdensome 2,000 years ago. Only the forms have changed; the weights, the worries, the fears haunt us even as they haunted the people of Palestine long ago.

Perhaps throughout the entirety of next week you will not have a moment to spend for yourself, in thought, in pondering, in prayer.
But you are here now, and I want to ask you to go on a journey within: to a place and a time when you knew “unforced rhythms”, a time without “heavy burdens”.

Close your eyes, remember it. Where are you? How old are you?
How do you feel?
Breathe deep, again, and again.

Share with someone where you were...

Now this sense of lightness and of unforced rhythm is the intention of God. Jesus declares it in this very passage; a “Father/Son operation” he says. And he also declares what you need; the ability to live fully, to “recover your life” with joy and easiness.

To “come to” him.

Can you do it?

Can you bring your burdens to the One who is stronger than you? Can you let go of being the “spoiled child”, who must have things their own way in their own time, and instead, bring yourself, and your burdens to God, and in trust, let God, let Jesus; know of them and carry them?

Can you admit you need help with your burdens?

Do you dare to be that vulnerable, honest, real?

Do you dare to trust?

Let's be silent again. Shut your eyes. See the burdens, feel the weights that you carry.

Can you sense that greater Presence, that Holy One near you? Available to assist you? Support you? Able to ease your burdens, share with you the "unforced rhythms of grace"?

Friends, I believe with all my heart and mind, that the "unforced rhythms" that Jesus speaks of in the Scripture today, are not escapism, or pie-in-the-sky fantasies for the deluded.

This relief, this grace, is one of the gifts of the Spirit, of God, of Jesus. This relief from burdens gives us rest, yes indeed. Soul rest, that is unlike any other. A deep deep rest, that restores.

And that sort of rest, my dear ones, gives us power, strength, energy in abundance!

I urge you, every day, whether it is on a run, or in a boat, or driving on the freeway, hiding in the bathroom while brushing your teeth: reach for that soul rest, find that place of peace, and let it hold your burdens, ease your burdens.

The voice of God in Jesus says, "Come to me".

Go, find rest.

Find joy, find strength.

Do not be afraid, just go!

And may you be renewed through the "unforced rhythms of grace".

Amen, alleluia!