

Worship Material
It's no yoke
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 9th July

Begin with an opening prayer

God, you are the source of creation, the giver of life.
Christ, you are the one who embodies the freedom God offers,
embracing life as it should be lived.

Holy Spirit, you are the inspiration and motivation to live
the kingdom life here and now.

Amen.

Read Matthew 11:16-19,25-30

Bible notes

Jesus has been visited by messengers from John the Baptist and has praised his forerunner; he then offers an almost parabolic assessment of the audience that has critiqued the ministry of both men. He likens them to children playing music – happy tunes did not get the crowd dancing; dirges did not make people mourn. In short, this crowd accused both Jesus and John (no doubt egged on by their religious and community leaders) of not being what they expected. John was demonic and deranged; Jesus was a drunk and a glutton. Jesus suggests that both he and John should be judged on what they have actually done (v.19c).

Then the lectionary skips to a moment when we get a glimpse of Jesus' inner life with God (vv.25-26), before he turns back to the crowd and says (paraphrased): whatever your assessment of me is, you need to know that all I do and say comes out of my relationship with the Father.

Then his tone seems to soften. Looking at the crowd he sees people being dragged from pillar to post by all kinds of poor leadership; in particular, he sees them weighed down by the expectations of their leaders and calls them to himself because he will give them refreshment, rest, life, adventure, and company. This is Zechariah 9 in action. Here Jesus is offering peace and the kind of leadership that will result in the formation of a community where all are looked after and all will find fulfilment. There are political overtones to words that we often apply only to our personal lives. Jesus is telling the crowd they have been badly led and, as a result of that, they are burdened with impossible expectations and unending conflicts. He is offering the peace and rest from all that strife that the prophets longed for. But Jesus is not offering a withdrawal from life. Rather, he is inviting us to be yoked to him as he brings the rule of God into the world. He is inviting us into partnership in the fulfilment of God's plans and purposes. What is wonderful is that this yoke is not ill-fitting, it doesn't weigh heavy or dig into our shoulders. Rather it is light and tailor made to fit each one of us who answers his call. Jesus is not just offering a spirituality that will help us navigate a hostile world; he is offering us a role in changing that world to fit the values of his kingdom: a truly fulfilling life for each one of us.

Prayer

Father, we thank you that Jesus emerged in captive Judea when those who trod your path had made it a dry and dusty trail; a wearisome wilderness of restrictions and rules, where religious regulations were a burden, keeping ordinary people from truly knowing you. We praise you for his revelation of a different life, another way to live, to pray, to love; and we thank you for the community of care to which we belong, the Church, and the life it encourages us to live – one with you, one with Christ and the Holy Spirit, in a lifestyle of love and light by which we aspire to live more fully, day by day, in your name.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Loving Lord Jesus, we take your yoke upon us now. Lift from of us any burdens we are carrying, any expectations we are trying to meet that are not from you. Give us rest, and lead us to those good works that you have prepared for us to do this week. Be glorified in us as we walk with you.

Amen.