



**ST ANDREWS GLENBROOK
UNITING CHURCH**

The 5th Sunday
in the Season of Pentecost

CALL TO WORSHIP

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 my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.

**We come to find that rest for our souls.
Be gentle, Lord Jesus, and humble our hearts.**

CHANT: *'Humble Yourself' by the Maranatha Singers*
Humble yourself in the sight of God
And God, will lift, you up, higher and higher,
And God will lift, you up, up into heaven
And God will lift, you up.

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Come to me,
come to me,
come to me,
is the chorus of your invitation, God.
Yet we arrive carrying so much baggage:
things done and left undone...

We arrive with the very things we sought to leave behind:
plans half-baked and hopes over-cooked.

And still, you are there:
arms outstretched,
welcome table prepared,
grace already weaving
its slow path through the warp and wonder of our lives.

Easy is your yoke,
 light is your burden,
 steadfast is your kindness,
 set us free to rest in you.
 Amen.

SONG: 'You Are Slow To Anger' by *Richard Bruxvoort Colligan*.

You are slow to anger, full of compassion, abounding in unfailing love.
 You are slow to anger, full of compassion, abounding in unfailing love.
 Teach us your way, and we will walk, we will walk in it.
 Teach us your way, and we will walk, we will walk in it.

GOSPEL READING

MATTHEW 11:-18-19 - 11:25-30

16 "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

17 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon';

19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

REFLECTION PART ONE

Wherever she goes,
 the boxes go with her.

Big boxes,
 medium,
 and small.

Different shapes.

All individually wrapped.

Some in simple brown-paper packaging,
 others more elaborate,
 and tied with an exuberance of ribbons.

Wherever she goes, the boxes go with her.
All of the boxes.
All of the time.
And in each box,
no matter how haphazard,
or carefully wrapped,
the contents are,
essentially, the same:
cans of worms,
that do not bear opening.

Wherever she goes,
the boxes go with her.

Over the course of time
she has spent her life gathering boxes:
adding to her collection
until she can hardly walk
under the soul-crushing weight of them.
There is guilt,
and shame,
and a whole bundle of small boxed regrets,
There is anger—
and envy—
and a big, heavy box,
where all her hurts are housed, and nursed.

Wherever she goes,
the boxes go with her.

At the top of the pile
is a small plain box,
in which only emptiness is found:
her lack of forgiveness
to herself:
the harshness of the human heart,
is a fearful and terrible judge.

Wherever she goes,
the boxes go with her.

And she is exhausted,
with the carrying of them.
So heavy and burdensome,
that her back is bent,
and she can no longer see the sky.

In her bone-weary tiredness,
 she almost misses the invitation,
 and the hand held, outstretched:

"Come to me,
 all you that are weary,
 and are carrying heavy burdens,
 and I will give you rest."

She tastes the word 'all' tentatively,
 and savours freedom.

The offer includes even her,
 with so many, many boxes.

She sniffs the word 'rest' carefully;
 it smells sweet:
 and her back begins to straighten,
 and the boxes begin to tumble all about her.

Wherever she went,
 the boxes went with her.

Until the day she chose the gifts
 of compassion and grace.

Now wherever she goes
 there is a lightness about her,
 a spring in her step...
 and she never tires of seeing the sky.

SONG: 'Come All You Weary' by Thrice
 Come all you weary with your heavy loads
 Lay down your burdens find rest for your souls
 Cause my yoke is easy and my burden is kind
 I'll take yours upon me and you can take mine

Come all you weary, move through the earth,
 You've been spurned at fine restaurants and kicked out of church,
 I've got a couple of loaves, so sit down at my feet,
 Lend me your ears and we'll break bread and eat

Come all you weary
 Come gather round near me
 Find rest for your souls

Come all you weary, crippled you lame
 I'll help you along you can lay down your canes
 We've got a long way to go but we'll travel as friends
 The lights growing bright further up, further in
 Come all you weary
 Come gather round near me

Find rest for your souls
Rest for your souls...

REFLECTION PART TWO

Have you noticed ripples of disagreement and division running through our bible readings over the past few weeks?

*threats to community identity and belonging
families divided*

there's inescapable tension at work in these texts
and in our lives at this time.

Yet Jesus stands in the midst of all of this.

Back on the 1960's, an engineer called Richard Buckminster Fuller, coined the term "tensegrity", - which combines the words 'tension' and 'integrity',
It describe how tension can be used for the integrity of a structure. Certain architectural forms that depend both on elements in compression and elements in tension.

"Tensegrity" can also help describe the journey of faith, and our life together. That experience of dynamic tension that holds us together, making the whole body stronger. In the church, we call this - Grace.

Grace is a uniquely Christian idea, that speak to us of how God loves us despite our sins. We mostly talk of Grace as something that is God given, something we cannot earn through any merit or effort of our own, it is pure gift.

Grace is the extraordinary affirmation that there is no one beyond the love of God, no place where God's love cannot reach.

But of course Grace is so much more than just a nice intellectual, theological concept. Grace is fundamentally a radical, counter-cultural challenging choice that Jesus calls us all to live into.

Grace is about giving without expecting anything in return. It's about being gentle with ourselves and with one another. It's about letting go of grudges and extending love when it is not deserved. It's about acknowledging all the brokenness within us and around us...and loving in spite of it.



Grace is the necessary tension
that holds together competing needs and complex questions,
in a way that gives integrity and strength to the whole community.

And Grace is what will hold us together in these difficult and uncertain days.

Richard Rohr says

*'Grace is always free. Grace is always humiliating to the human ego.
We just don't like getting love for free—and that, beloved is resurrection.'*

(from his Easter sermon 2020)

When you hear it put like that,
we may recognise that Grace is always profoundly unsettling.
In moments of disagreement and division
Jesus offers us an unsettling Grace.
The invitation of peace
and the assurance of presence
does not come despite our human contradictions,
but amid our own wounded and beautiful lives.

Grace leads us away from certainty or the illusion of control
and instead urges us toward a peace
held together in dynamic life-giving tension.

Again and again,
the Gospel reminds us that our task is never to earn God's love and grace,
but to share that love and grace.

At the end of our Gospel reading for today we find this unsettling grace,
With its reminder that paradox, doubt, and contradiction are also woven into the journey
of faith.

*Be like John and you are a demon;
be like Jesus and you are a glutton or drunkard.
The kingdom is hidden from the wise and shown to the child.
My yoke is easy and my burden light.*

A friend described her faith to me recently, she said " its not all rainbows and
butterflies...there's still a yoke".

If you're not familiar with what a yoke is,
a yoke is a large piece of wood that is attached between two animals, like oxen,
and they are made to carry or pull something in a particular direction.
This image of being yoked to something, even to Jesus, isn't exactly attractive or
comforting.

I think most of us prefer to imagine that we can be free and in control of our own lives.
But the truth is, whether we know it or not, we are all yoked to something.
You might be yoked to the pursuit of health, wealth, happiness or success
You might be yoked to a particular story, identity, culture, politics, pleasure or ideal.
You might be yoked to a sense of responsibility and care.

Let me encourage you to take some time this week to honestly uncover and examine what your life is yoked to?

What is actually directing your choice, your responses, your priorities.

Does this yoke feel heavy or does it feel light?

Can you recognise and name what burdens are you carrying that are crying out for rest?

In the bible a yoke is often a symbol for humble submission.

Submission, now there's another unsettling word.

But in Matthew's gospel, the writer invites us to understand submission to God as something that actually brings freedom and a way to lighten your load.

When Jesus says - *My yoke is easy and my burden is light,*

Jesus is saying:

walk with me

learn from me

lean on me

let's do this together.

As Jesus prays to the father

we can hear our own prayers spoken too:

Show us how to find our rest in you O God.

Teach us the ways to loosen our fear of vulnerability.

Help us live with the necessary tension that brings integrity to our church structure.

Reveal to us that Grace that comes as pure gift

and a persistent challenge

which undoes the ego

and transforms the world.

Jesus answers:

Come to me, all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens

And I will give you rest.

May it be so for you

And for me.

Amen.

SONG: 'In the Field of the Lord' by *the Porters Gate Project*

In the fields of the Lord, our work is rest

He is moving in our hands and feet to bless

In the fields of the Lord, in the fields of the Lord

In the fields of the Lord, our work is rest

In the vineyards of the Lord, our work is light

He is tending every leaf and every vine

In the vineyards of the Lord, in the vineyards of the Lord

In the vineyards of the Lord, our work is light

In the garden of the Lord, our work is sound

He is weaving every thorn into a crown

In the garden of the Lord, in the garden of the Lord
 In the garden of the Lord, our work is sound

At the harvest of the Lord, the fields are white
 Oh, He will wipe away the tears from ev'ry eye
 At the harvest of the Lord, at the harvest of the Lord
 At the harvest of the Lord, the fields are white

PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

It's hard to understand healing when so many are sick.
 It's hard to understand blessing when so many are in need.
 It's hard to trust
 when trust is so often broken.

Yet you come to us
 in the midst of sickness,
 in the midst of need,
 in the midst of brokenness.
 And you see us—
 you see to our very hearts.
 And you love us—
 you love us to our core.

Take these gifts and use them for the healing of the nations.
 Take our lives and use them as blessings for brokenness.
 Take our hearts and fill them with your love that never ends.
 Amen.

SENDING WORDS

In our weariness we come before you, God:
 carrying our burdens.
 We come before you, God:
 confused and uncertain,
 fragile and shaky.
 In you we find what we need.
 Support us and make us strong, Lord.
 Unite us as people
 and make the bonds between us stable.

Father, Son, and Spirit—three in one,
 You are the arch of Divine Love
 that holds together our whole existence.
 Amen.