

Dear Friends,

The Gospel printed in the 10:00 a.m. program was incorrect and what was read was incorrect. Since much of my sermon was based on this text, I'd urge you to read the gospel before jumping into the sermon. Thanks...Don

**Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

*Jesus said to the crowd, "To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,*

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

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

*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; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 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.*

*"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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."*

**Donald G. Brown**  
**St. Mary's SF**  
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**Proper 9 A**

Any of you who follow the Giants know they are not having a stellar year so far. How many of you follow the Giants? Now, how many of you know that the Episcopal Church, like the Roman Catholic Church, has a few communities of

monastic women, commonly referred to as “nuns.” If you want to meet an Episcopal nun, who is also a priest, come to the 7 am service here this Wednesday when Sr. Eleanor, a member of the community of St. John the Baptist will preside at the Eucharist.

Recently I heard a story about three Episcopal nuns visiting from out of town who went to a Giants game in China Basin. The nuns happened to sit in front of three men who had been drinking plenty of beer long before the game started. The nuns were in their habits and the guy inquired about them and found out they were Episcopal nuns.

These guys decided to have some fun at the nuns’ expense. So the first guy says to the others (loud enough for the nuns ahead to hear), "I think I want to move to Oregon, there are only 100 Episcopalians living there... "

The second guy speaks up and says, "I want to move to Washington, there are only 50 Episcopalians living there..."

The third guy speaks up and says, "I want to move to Idaho, there are only 25 Episcopalians living there..."

One of the nuns turns around and looks the third guy in the eye and calmly says, "Why don't you 3 gentlemen just go to hell, there aren't any Episcopalians there."

There are times when the direct approach to solving a problem has its merits. In that rather odd, at least I think it is odd, first scripture lesson from Genesis, we get some idea of how people used the direct approach in finding marriage partners before Internet dating and hook up apps. In those days, and it is still true in many ethnic communities, marriages were arranged and those being married had little or nothing to say about it.

I suspect this passage is a quaint story about how Abraham and Sarah’s son, Isaac was presented with the woman he had to marry and this passage really has nothing to say to us today about how we ought to approach marriage or life. Except the part about putting a ring in Rebekah’s nose, could be taken as biblical sanction for today’s popular practice of body piercing.

Now that I am in trouble with some of you parents, it is past time for me to move on to the readings from Romans and Matthew.

This morning's passage from Romans contains one of my very favorite verses in the Bible: St. Paul declares: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."

Those of us who have struggled with our weight over the years know the truth of this admission by St. Paul only too well. The healthy foods we should eat, we don't eat. The bad stuff that tastes so good, is what we all too often eat with delight, only to hate what we have done after our stomachs are full. On a more serious note, anyone who has ever struggled with drug or alcohol addiction understands the painful truth of Paul's lament. The good we would do, we don't do and the bad we would not do, we do.

The passage ends with Paul moaning, "Wretched person that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Paul's answer, and the answer for hundreds of millions of people over the last 2000 years, is Jesus Christ and his community of helpful disciples...and these days, that's our task to be healers and helpers.

In Matthew today we heard another passage that confirms why Jesus is known to us as rescuer and savior. This particular passage has comforted and encouraged so many of us in our times of spiritual and emotional need.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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."

For those of you who have not been to an old fashioned farm lately, a yoke is usually a curved piece of wood that links two oxen or water buffalo together at the shoulders so they can pull a heavy burden more easily by dividing the weight of the burden equally between them. If one animal could pull 100 pounds by himself, logic would say that two animals would pull 200 pounds but when they are yoked they can actually pull 300 pounds. Jesus is saying that when we put on his yoke, the burdens and suffering we carry through life are much easier to handle.

When bad stuff of whatever origin comes into our lives and we encounter suffering, we ask ourselves, "Why is this happening to me?" And when disaster strikes us, there are always those in the religious community who are self-styled

authorities who chalk the situation up to “God’s will.” Yet in the words of Jesus we hear the assurance that what is God’s will is actually that he be invited to share our sufferings. If we will but trust in God’s care for us, he will lift his half and more, of the burden from our shoulders.

Trust does not come to us naturally after our early childhood years. Trust is much easier for the small child or the ordinary beast of burden, than for wise and clever people we are. Plus many of us have been convinced that our burdens are ours to deal with and in this cruel world, we have only ourselves, and ourselves alone, to carry our troubles and sorrows.

Trust comes only when we find trustworthiness revealed in a relationship with another person. Trust comes when we feel accepted by someone who does not belittle our worries, scorn our dreams, condemn our doubts, or make light of our sorrows. Trust comes when we can be completely honest with another and know that we will receive loving honesty in return. Trust comes when we know another who can empathize with our situation and circumstances. Trust is something we give another when we feel safe in making ourselves vulnerable.

The whole story of salvation is one of God making himself totally vulnerable in the person of Jesus. Jesus was born in poverty. Jesus understood what it meant to be cold and hungry. Jesus knew the comfort of loving relationships and the heartbreak of betrayal by those he loved. Jesus was as painfully mortal as any child who ever drew a breath on this planet. Jesus had no exemption from any kind of human pain. Jesus walked in our shoes and despite all the hurt the world could throw at him; his love for us is constant, sure, and certain. Jesus name is synonymous with trust and love that knows no limits.

When Jesus invites us to give him our cares and burdens, this is no casual invitation. Do you mourn the loss of a love, a job or a treasured possession? Do you wrestle with a temptation that is your secret shame? Are you feeling betrayed, or lonely, or do you think God has forgotten you? Are you just worn down by the struggle to make it through the day?

Jesus lived all these feelings. He knows our reality. He does not think that we are weak or unworthy. No, he invites us to take his yoke, or to put it another way, he invites us to connect with him so that he can help us carry our burdens and

discover healing and hope. But even Jesus cannot mend a broken heart unless we give him all the pieces.

Whatever heavy burdens you bring with you this day, whatever ache you might have in your heart, whatever fear haunts you, whatever anger or disillusionment eats away at you, hear Jesus' promise. His yoke, the mantle of his love and acceptance of us, is true and good and his burden is light.

So dear friends, whatever body piercings you might have, whatever good intentions you have had that have not turned out as well as you had hoped, from my own experience with life thus far, I can assure you that when you are courageous enough to really place all your troubles with Jesus and allow him to help carry your burdens, you will find rest for your soul. You will find rest for your souls. AMEN