

Trinity 5 2026

I stand here in need of God's mercy and grace, may I speak in the name of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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

We all carry burdens and all of us likely know the feeling of being weary. Maybe that is exactly how you feel today. Worn out, exhausted and weighed down by life, worries and uncertainties. And so to you Jesus says this morning: 'Come, come and I will give you rest.'

But how is Jesus giving us rest? The rest Jesus gives us can look differently at different times. But the act alone of coming to Jesus with our burdens and our worries can be an act of rest. We might sit down in a quiet place, possibly a church, or somewhere on a park bench. Or we take a walk through some beautiful nature. And as we come to Jesus like that we can simply bring to Jesus the things making us weary and the burdens we carry. Sometimes that moment of choosing to come to Jesus with our worries and burdens can make them feel a little lighter, reminding us that we are not alone, but that God is with us, no matter what. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will gift us with a sense of peace in such a moment, despite all that we have going on.

But Jesus' care for us in our weariness and as we carry heavy burdens goes even further.

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.

These words of Jesus are a contradiction. A yoke is not easy. A yoke used to be put on farm animals, oxen, mules, or horses. The yoke would weigh on an animal's neck, but more importantly the yoke would be connected to

things the animal needed to drag. Yoke doesn't mean anything easy, a yoke means work, hard work. And a burden is a burden; it is something that weighs down whoever carries it. Yoke and burden are words used in relation to things that are hard work, things that are heavy and difficult. Not things that are easy and light.

So if Jesus wants to encourage us, why not simply say that he will take away our burdens and not put yokes around our necks? Because that is not what the reality of life is like. Life does come with needs and responsibility and that reality will at times bring worries and burdens with it. Our needs and the needs of those who depend on us matter. Responsibility is not easy, but imagine a world where no one would take responsibility for anything or anyone. That would be a very scary and hopeless world I believe. But how then can Jesus promise us an easy yoke and a light burden?

Because the yoke Jesus invites us to put on and the burden he wants us to carry are love, grace and mercy. Jesus' yoke for us is made out of God's unconditional love for us. God loves us no matter what, we can be at our absolute best, we can be highly successful or we can be at our absolute worst and our life in tatters, we can be independent and highly productive, or in great need and unable to do anything for ourselves or anyone else, and God's love for us will never change or become smaller. God loves us, simply as we are, at every stage of our lives.

God's yoke for us is made of never-ending grace. We all mess up sometimes, we fall short, but no matter what God's door always remains open for us, forgiveness is always available and God is always ready to help us pick up the pieces and to try and repair as much as possible of the damage we have caused.

God's yoke is made of ever-present mercy. When we are struggling, when we are in need, when we are broken-hearted, God sees us and mercifully

wants to bind up our wounds, comforting us, letting us know we are not alone.

God's unconditional love for us, God's never-ending grace and God's ever-present mercy are the yoke that Jesus offers us. That is indeed an easy yoke, but a yoke nonetheless, because as we receive unconditional love, never-ending grace and ever-present mercy from God, this yoke is put on us so we can love others, offer grace to others and show mercy in the face of need. We are not God, but what we receive from God in unconditional love, never-ending grace and ever-present mercy, we are to share with others to the best of our abilities.

For my yoke is easy and by burden is light.

This piece of fabric I carry around my neck is called a stole; priests wear it whenever they are part of a sacramental service. Priests wear a stole as a reminder of the yoke Jesus invites us all to put on. A yoke of God's unconditional love, never-ending grace and ever-present mercy, not demanding of us beyond what we can give or do, but simply to share love, grace and mercy from the overflow we receive. It is not made of wood or any other heavy material; it is made of fabric and so is quite light. To priests it is a physical reminder that God's yoke is easy and the burden light. But that yoke is not only offered to priests, it is offered to all who wish to follow Jesus. Priests just seem to need more reminders, that indeed the yoke Jesus gives us is easy and the burden is light.

But if ever you need a reminder of the yoke of God's unconditional love, never-ending grace and ever-present mercy, I hope that whenever you see a priest wearing such a stole, you might be reminded.

For my yoke is easy and by burden is light.

Amen.