

'Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' Matthew 11:25-30

The following was something I shared with the Mitford congregation at the 10am service on January 19th and again at the Tuesday communion service. I thought it would be good to repeat it here in the magazine so more people can 'hear' what I am teaching about being a disciple of Jesus.

Different rabbis had different interpretations of how they understood the scriptures. Each rabbi's interpretations were called his '**yoke**'. So a young disciple would take on quite a burden of law keeping and learning. He would take on the yoke because he wanted to be like his rabbi, to show him that he was capable of passing on his rabbi's yoke, his teaching, to others. Then the rabbi would invite the boy to devote his entire life to being a disciple of his-not an easy undertaking.

Jesus invites us to come to him, and learn from him, to make our lives' central focus to be on him, to be Christ centred and not me centred, and to devote our whole life to knowing him and being more like him, **to be his disciple**. And he does it again and again throughout our lives, not just once. He continues to challenge and change us, to transform our lives to be Christ like...if we let him

In Matthew 11 Jesus is saying the he is the focus of all seeking and understanding. We cannot grasp an understanding of God in our own strength, (as Jeremiah 29:11-14a says), it is only by God revealing himself to us. Only when God makes himself known

through Jesus can we KNOW him, and have a personal relationship with him. He invites us to know him-amazing isn't it?

Only Jesus knows the Father and reveals the Father to others, not John the Baptist or the wise teachers. Jesus is God, understands God, fully represents God, and has God's nature, so we need to KNOW Jesus.

Jesus says '**I will give you rest.**' Allow me please to be honest with you. I have never known a more stressed and stretched church! Don't get me wrong, you are wonderful; hard working, God loving, kind, caring, beautiful peoplebut so many of you are so weary and heavy laden, struggling and striving to maintain difficult work/life balances, such busy busy lives. I often feel as a church we don't have enough fun or down time, to chill and just enjoy each other's company. You are all so busy. You just about make it to church each week. Many of you don't feel you have time to also go to a house group, and hardly anyone comes to the church prayer meeting which can be instead of house group once a month.

Jesus' way is different. He says '**take my yoke upon you and learn from me**'. His teaching is not burdensome. You are not to strive and struggle. How can we live life the best way? It is Jesus' way, not the Pharisees and Sadducees way of thinking, teaching and living, which was all laws, duties and regulations. Jesus came to lift off the burdens and heavy loads-your burdens that you continue to carry-I don't know where you picked them up, but you are bowed down with them.

Discipleship is about knowing God and being more like Jesus, not beating ourselves up all the time because we fail. Jesus offers rest and peace. He says '**share my yoke**', it isn't as heavy with two. To train oxen an older beast would be yoked together with a young ox and they would walk side by side. The young one needed to learn to pace themselves, how to plod using least energy. It is just the same for a disciple who needs to walk alongside his rabbi.

Do you see what Jesus is offering us? He's not trying to make life harder. He isn't adding something extra to the burdens of life, but he comes to be with us. Remember the INCARNATION? **Jesus CAME to dwell among us, to be a friend, master, and a Saviour, one who enters into our lives, partners with us, walks beside and shares our burdens.**

He takes our sins, forgives them, and then he walks with us to show us how to live freely, simply, and how to love and work, and to be at peace with a purpose, strength and eternal vision for all our lives that we will not find anywhere else.

This is what being a DISCIPLE of Jesus is. He wants us to be with him, to know him and to know his life and peace.

Michael Green says Jesus invites us to share his yoke, not of duty, but of love. It is the response of the liberated not the obligated.'

Which are you? Which do you want to be?

Grace and peace, Joanna