



July 9, 2017 Mt. 11: {16-19} 25-30 & Zech. 9: 9-10

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Stone, Naomi. [Resting in the Arms of Grace](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Finding Rest for our Souls](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

Jesus is dealing with people who are looking for answers. But often they are looking in all the wrong places. It is said; "If you ask the wrong question, you will always get the wrong answer". They had John the Baptist and his message. Now they have Jesus' message. Each seems to be answering the same questions, but they have different answers. This makes the task of knowing God's will very hard, leaving them pulling the load all by themselves. Now Jesus offers to yoke up with those who are honestly seeking God's will instead of their own. Once the human made confusions and complications are removed by his revelations, the harshness and heaviness seem to lift

#### Mt. 11: 16-19, 25-30

*(These verses are included in the Revised Common Lectionary for this week)*

*16 To what can I **compare** this generation? They are like **children** sitting in the marketplaces and **calling out** to others: 17 We **played** the flute for you, and you did not **dance**; we **sang** a dirge, 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, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."* *But **wisdom** is **proved** right by her actions."*

25 At that time Jesus said, "**I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth**, because you have **hidden** these things from the **wise** and **learned**, and **revealed** them to little **children**. 26 Yes, **Father**, for this was your **good pleasure**. 27 **All things** have been **committed** to me by my **Father**. No one **knows** the **Son** except the **Father**, and no one **knows** the **Father** except the **Son** and those to whom the **Son** chooses to **reveal** him. 28 **Come to me**, all you who are **weary** and **burdened**, 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."

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Jesus promises help when we come to him with our burdens. How does this promise enable you to deal with the tough things in your life?

**PRAYER:** Jesus, I have never fully explored what it might mean to be in a yoke with you. Too often, I submit to this yoke only after trying to do something myself and finding too little strength to carry something on my own. You reveal this simple truth is hidden in plain sight that is: pray (become yoked) first. Thank you for being gentle with me as I try to trust you will never leave me to struggle alone. Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**COMPARE:** To compare something is to set one thing alongside another in order to explain something else.

*What is Jesus explaining in this example?*

**CHILDREN:** Children are necessarily ignorant of many things. Because of that ignorance they can make demands that make little or no sense.

*Have you ever found yourself in a childlike position when you pray? What happened?*

**CALLING OUT:** Jesus uses the example of children who are calling out for something, but are never satisfied with what they are given, because they really haven't identified what the real issue that needs attention.

*What is the real issue in this example?*

**I PRAISE YOU:** Jesus, in his prayer, knows exactly what he is about in direct contrast to the children above. Angelus Silesius put it this way: "The most noble of prayers is when he who prays is transformed inwardly into that before which he kneels."

*How does praising God help to transform you?*

**PLAYED / DANCE / SANG / MOURN:** This contrast lifts up the fact that no matter what Jesus or John the Baptist did, the response was the same – rejection.

*When was the last time you in effect said: “Don’t confuse me with the facts”?*

**JOHN / SON OF MAN:** John preached repent and then you can be saved. Jesus preached you are saved and this moved people to repent. To repent is to turn around and look at something in a new way.

*Compare John’s message with Jesus’. Which of these attracts you and why?*

**WISDOM/ WISE / LEARNED / LEARN:** Those who pay attention to their experiences are those who learn and become wise.

*What have you paid attention to in this teaching? What ‘wisdom’ have you gained from it?*

**PROVED:** Jesus is confident that time will prove him right about God and God’s will.

*How does your faith help you develop this same sort of confidence?*

**FATHER / LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH:** Jesus always directs himself and others to the source of all that is – God.

*What effect does this have on the people who are truly listening to Jesus?*

**HIDDEN:** A thing is hidden when it is not out in plain sight.

*What makes it so difficult to fool small children or pets? How does the ‘learning’ of the ‘wise’ hide the truth that Jesus reveals to the ‘little ones’?*

**REVEAL:** To reveal, is to remove that which hides something.

*Does this text help you to see Jesus more clearly? If so, how?*

**COME TO ME:** Jesus welcomes all those who were rejected by the ‘wise and learned’ of his day.

*Who are the welcoming people of faith in your life now? What attracts you to them?*

**WEARY / BURDEN / BURDENED:** The law that was given by Moses to free the people from the slavery of ignorance has now become so complicated and convoluted, that it itself becomes that which enslaves/ burdens.

*Are there places in your faith life that have this feeling for you now? If so, what are they?*



**REST:** Jesus will take the 613 laws and bring them back to their original simplicity. This gives the powerless rest from the burdensome and sometimes contradictory understanding of God’s will current in that day.

*Remember the last time you had to struggle with something that was so complicated or conflicting that whatever you did you seemed to fail. Does scripture study help you to find ‘rest’ as you search for God’s will in your life?*

**YOKE:** A yoke is a way to unite two sources of energy in order to make the task easier.

*Is your prayer life a form of a yoke?*

**SOULS:** The soul is the center of a person’s being and becoming.

*What helps you develop your soul?*

**GENTLE / HUMBLE:** The arrogance of those who thought they knew the mind of God so well that they could judge/condemn others is compared with Jesus as gentle and humble.

*Compare the last time you encountered arrogance with the last time you encountered gentleness. What feelings do you remember about those occasions? How did they affect your ‘soul’?*

**EASY:** Something is easy when it is uncomplicated and achievable without stress.

*How does this text make Jesus’ teaching ‘easy’?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 11: 16 // Lk. 7: 31-5; Mt. 11: 18 // Lk. 1:15; Mt. 11: 19 // Mt. 9:10; Mt. 11: 25ff // Lk. 10:21f; 1 Cor. 26-9; Mt. 11: 27 // Jn. 3: 6, 46; 7: 28; Mt. 11:28-9 // Sir. 24:18; Eccus. 51:23-7; Jer. 6:16;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Zech. 9: 9-10; [Ps. 145: 1-2, 8-14](#); Rom. 8: 9,11-13; Mt. 11: 25-30; Revised Common Lectionary: Gn. 24:34-8, 42-9, 58-67; [Ps. 45: 10-17](#); Rom. 7: 15-25; Mt. 11: 16-19, 25-30;

**SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

When you love something, you grant it soul, you see its soul, and you let its soul touch yours. You have to love something deeply to know its soul. Before the resonance of love, you are largely blind to a thing's meaning, value, and its power to literally save you. In fact, until you can appreciate and even delight in the ecstatic wag of a dog's tail and other such ubiquitous signals, I doubt if you have discovered your own soul. Richard Rohr

No soul can be really at rest until it has given up all dependence on everything else and has been forced to depend on the Lord alone. As long as our expectation is from other things, nothing but disappointment awaits us. Feelings may change, and will change with our changing circumstances; doctrines and dogmas may be upset; Christian work may come to naught; prayers may seem to lose their fervency; promises may seem to fail; everything that we have believed in or depended upon may seem to be swept away, and only God is left, just God, the bare God, if I may be allowed the expression; simply and only God. - Hannah Whitall Smith

The great danger of the turmoil of the end-time in which we live is losing our souls. Losing our souls means losing touch with our center, our true call in life, our mission, our spiritual task. Losing our soul means becoming so distracted by and preoccupied with all that is happening around us that we end up fragmented, confused, and erratic. Jesus is very aware of that danger. He says: "Take care not to be deceived, because many will come using my name and saying, 'I am the one' and 'The time is near at hand'. Refuse to join them". Henri Nouwen

You don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body. C. S. Lewis

"Nothing can come between God and the soul." --Julian of Norwich

Small souls are incapable of knowing a great God, and great souls are never satisfied with a small or stingy God. Richard Rohr

In this case, when Jesus speaks of little ones, he is not talking about children. He rather has in mind the non-elites, the common people. He is saying that neither great learning nor long years of indoctrination are necessary to know what God has revealed. After all the works of mercy, to use one example, do not require much beyond a sensitivity to the needs of others. In fact, great learning can blind a person to those needs. Fr. Robert Beck. Pgs. 107-8. 2008. (See below)

All the truly great persons I have ever met are characterized by what I would call "radical humility." They are deeply convinced that they are drawing from another source; they are instruments. Their genius is not their own; it is borrowed. We are moons, not suns, except in our ability to pass on the light. Our life is not our own, yet, at some level, enlightened people know that their life has been given to them as a sacred trust. They live in gratitude and confidence, and they try to let the flow continue through them. Richard Rohr

God gave you the abilities that you have and you rejoice in them, but you always recognize the source of all that you have and you keep on trying to make yourself better, fulfilled; use the gifts and come to be all that God wants you to be. That's humility, and it can be a difficult virtue to understand, I think. [Bp Thomas Gumbleton](#)

Humility is attentive patience. -Simone Weil

Humility is living in the truth; it is submitting to the truth. It is living the human condition of inadequacy and dependence with clear awareness of what matters most. Fr. Jonah Wharff

None of us want a God who asks us to live in a life-long patience, predicated on the promise that in the end, whenever that will be, love and justice will prevail, all tears will be dried, and all will finally be well. We want life, love, justice, and consummation now, not in some distant future and only after a lifetime of heartache. God, as an old Jewish axiom puts it, is never in a hurry! [Fr. Ron Rolheiser](#)

Thus, through his baptismal experience, Jesus discovers his identity as Son, the continual presence of the Father in his life, the power of the Spirit who dwells in him, and his mission to be achieved through the proclamation of his kingdom and through suffering. In other words, from within his deepest identity he discovers a mystery to be revealed and a mission to be accomplished by himself. Pg. 44. Olivera, Bernardo. OCSO. The Sun at Midnight. Collegeville, MN. Liturgical Press. 2012

Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths, or the turning inwards in prayer for five short minutes. - Etty Hillesum

Those who see prayer as something to paste onto one's life at points in the day or at the end of the week will not be able to withstand the pain for too long. Consequently, the compassionate road will be closed or kept barely open with charity slowed down to a trickle, and the price being exacted so high that personal bitterness, skepticism, and apathy result. For those willing to pick up the burden through "prayerful availability" the possibilities can be different, the results transformed. The road will still remain dangerous and the spiritually glib will be buried beneath it. Yet, there will be one essential difference: on each curve, on each hill, during every straight area of the road, if we are alert, if we wait with a sense of expectancy – there will be God. To a faith-full person, everywhere is the Lord's home. Wick, Robert. [Availability: The Problem and the Gift](#). NY. Paulist Press. 1986. Pgs. 68-9.

When Moses becomes weary, leading his people through their trials in the desert, God tells him, *My presence will go with you, and I will give your rest.* Jesus tells his disciples, *Come to me all who toil and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* For Moses as for Jesus, rest is a precious ointment, a balm for their heavy heart. Jesus, for whom anything was possible, did not offer “seven secret coping strategies” to get work done faster, or “nine spiritual stress management techniques” to enhance our effectiveness. Instead, he offered the simple practice of rest as a natural, nourishing, and essential companion to our work. Learn from me, he invited, and you will find rest for your souls. Muller, Wayne. *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest.* NY. Bantam Books.1999. . Page 24.

One indication of the importance of a saying in the gospels can be found in how many other texts outside the official “canon” of scripture it can be found.

1. Mt. 11:25 is repeated in The Homilies of Clement (Book 8, 6:4), a third century document.
2. References to Mt. 11:27 can be found in Tertullian’s *Prescription of the Heretics*, chapter 21 (cira 200), and Origen’s *On First Principles* (cira 200) Chapter 3:4).
3. The Gospel of Thomas (early 2<sup>nd</sup> century) quotes Mt. 11:30 in Saying 90.
4. In the Qumran documents the Teacher of Righteousness said: “Teachers of lies have smothered thy people with lies, whereas Thou hast given me knowledge through thy marvelous mysteries”
5. *Gospel According to the Hebrews*: “He who wonders shall reign: and he who reigns shall rest.” (Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 1.9.45,5) and again in V.14.96,3.
6. *Osyrynychus Papyrus 654, Logion 1*: Let not him who seeks ceasur until he finds; and when he finds he will wonder; and wondering, he will reign; and reigning, he will rest.

Let there be a place somewhere in which you can breathe naturally, quietly, and not have to take your breath in continuous short gasps. A place where your mind can be idle, and forget its concerns, descend into silence, and worship the Father in secret. There can be no contemplation where there is no secret. Pg. 83 Thomas Merton. *New Seeds of Contemplation.* (New York, New York: New Directions,1961.

When I am liberated by silence, when I am no longer involved in the measurement of life, but in the living of it, I can discover a form of prayer in which there is effectively no distraction. My whole life becomes a prayer. My whole silence is full of prayer. The world of silence in which I am immersed contributes to my prayer. Thomas Merton

Humility seeks silence not in inactivity but in ordered activity, in the activity that is proper to our poverty and helplessness before God. Humility goes to pray and finds silence through words. But because it is natural for us to pass from words to silence, and from silence to words, humility is in all things silent. Even when it speaks, humility listens. The words of humility are so simple, so gentle and so poor that they find their way without effort to the silence of God. Merton, Thomas. *Thoughts in Solitude.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1986

All too often the love of God is discussed as though it were an obligation imposed on us. We are obliged to love God. In fact, it is the other way around. God is the one who is obliged to love us because he has committed himself to that love. Ours is the privilege of accepting his invitation. Nor is this merely a metaphor or poetry. The universe is animated by love, and we are the target of that love, even if at times there are things that happen to us that don’t seem to be compatible with love. Greeley, Andrew. *When Life Hurts.* Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1988. **GOD’S LOVE FOR US:** Page 27.

More detailed information on this section of Matthew can be found in: Carter, Warren. *Matthew and the Margins.* NY. Orbis Books. 2000. . Pages 253-261.

...a soul without a sense of Sabbath is an agitated soul. Sr. Joan Chittister

Work when there is work to do. Rest when you are tired. One thing done in peace will most likely be better than ten things done in panic...I am not a hero if I deny rest; I am only tired. Susan McHenry

"We are called to seek justice, not to burn out seeking it. I am not going to fix the world by myself. I have to realize the fact that sometimes I try to do too much and end up doing nothing. ... My soul will be restored every time my efforts toward environmental, social, or economic justice are put into action, one step at a time. This restoration is also my rest. We must work to sustain the rhythm God has built into life. God worked and rested. We must do the same. Jesus taught and healed, then retreated. We can follow his example." -Diana Rodriguez

#### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs.134-137. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs. 107-111. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2001. Pgs. 108-111. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)