



Hampden Heights Sentinel

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Accept only Christ's yoke of liberty. Page 1
- Can we be simultaneously saint and sinner? Page 2
- A healthier rice. Page 3
- Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it. Page 3
- A scavenger hunt to challenge your knowledge and determination! Page 4

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*Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.
~John 5:24 NIV~*

Alabaster Box by Dave Taylor

Take My Yoke (Matthew 11:28-30)

When Jesus addressed the multitudes of people who gathered around Him, He focused on essential messages of truth that could be received by all. Sometimes these truths were delivered in the form of parables, in which spiritual wisdom was cloaked in stories with visually-rich objects and activities from everyday life, serving as an alluring candy coating. This teaching technique helped to anchor abstract truths in the minds of His listeners by association with familiar images, making the lessons more memorable and more easily recalled. Additionally, this approach helped ensure the message would be revisited by the hearer, when afterward they encountered the objects and activities in their life, offering an opportunity to again reflect on the words of Christ, and to extract new insights from His "candy-coated" nuggets of truth.

In other instances when Jesus did not offer a story-based parable to the hungry crowd, He still used a familiar object as a metaphor to teach spiritual truth. In Matthew 11:28, Christ proclaims to the throng, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The invitation to come to Jesus is extended to all,

and the promised reward is the blessing of rest. Although at first glance this promise appears to be condition-free, a careful reading reveals two conditions that are implied. First, receipt of the blessing requires approach to the Giver. Come to Me and I will give. Secondly, in order to receive, the individual must recognize their need. Jesus is calling out to those who are living with a heavy burden. If members of His audience are insufficiently self-aware, they may think this is a call for "others" in the multitude. Yet, there is no heavier burden to carry than the burden of sin, a burden carried by each one of us. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). What type of rest does Jesus offer to us? Does He offer a moratorium on labor? Does He encourage His followers to live a life of idleness? Certainly not! In another scripture, Jesus told the Jews, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working" (John 5:17 NIV). Salvation is the work of God for our benefit, and He has invited us to participate with Him. Go, teach and baptize (Matthew 28:19). The fourth commandment's injunction to work is perhaps equally significant to the command to rest ("Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work" Exodus 20:9).

Jesus proceeds to clarify to His audience the type of rest that is being offered, and He

accomplishes this by employing a metaphor from agriculture. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me" (Matthew 11:29a). In an attention-grabbing paradox, Christ offers rest in verse 28, but then immediately follows up in verse 29 by urging acceptance of His yoke, an instrument associated with work. There is a difference between how a master drives a team of horses and how he drives a team of oxen. Horses are driven using a harness set by a master who rides along behind the team, while oxen are driven using a yoke steered by a master who walks alongside the team. So, Christ was willing to travel over the very same ground as we, His oxen. "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus describes the yoke as "my" yoke. This imagery permits us to not only envision Jesus as the Master who employs the yoke to guide His creatures as He walks the shared path, but also to see Jesus wearing the yoke Himself as He applies His power to lighten the burden we experience. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4).

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Interestingly, Jesus does not invite us to learn of Him and then take His yoke. Rather, Christ presents the process in the reverse order; acceptance of the yoke and then learning of Him. The implication is that true knowledge of Christ is achieved only through the experience of working in harmony with Him. Until we step out in faith, put our shoulders against the yoke and begin pulling, our knowledge of Jesus will remain largely academic and superficial.

Jesus declares "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29b), and this characteristic is richly

demonstrated at the last supper with His disciples. "He (Jesus) riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (John 13:4-5). Yet, this great act of love and humility was exceeded at Calvary. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8). Jesus promises that if you take his yoke, you "shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29c).

This is a partial quote from a promise found in Jeremiah. "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). Again this confirms the spiritual nature of the rest that Jesus is offering.

Lest there be any listeners who are still hesitant to accept Christ's offer, He seeks to encourage them with reassuring words that "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). "The yoke is placed upon the oxen to aid them in drawing the load, to lighten the burden.

So, with the yoke of Christ. When our will is swallowed up in the will of God, and we use His gifts to bless others, we shall find life's burden light. He who walks in the way of God's commandments is walking in company with Christ, and in His love the heart is at rest" (Desire of Ages, p331). May each of us resolve to follow the advice offered by Paul to the church at Galatia. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). Accept only Christ's yoke of liberty.

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Going Deeper by Barbara Snyder

The Weeds and the Wheat

I was a good kid. Most of us were "good" kids. I was so "good" that I adopted almost all of my parents' external values and pleased them. Yet I was a child and naive. Growing up is a difficult adjustment to life. I did the right things (mostly) as an adult too, yet I found daily responsibilities so increasingly difficult that I started to see issues with myself. I thought relationships were black or white, my fault or theirs, all or nothing. Weeds or wheat. I was becoming hypercritical of myself and them. I wanted everyone to think my way; I wanted perfection as I saw it as a teen and young adult. Thankfully some people perceive and notice what I hadn't: that there is a double side of everything and everyone. It was only with

time and trials, love, and staying on the journey that I started accepting the faults, failures, and fallings of myself and others. I am in this field of weeds and wheat with everyone else. Except for one thing, that being I had an advocate, an unfailing friend, a Savior.

Francis of Assisi said "Can true humility and compassion exist in our words and in our eyes unless we know we too are capable of any act?" That's a tremendous question and a Biblical principle that almost no one talks about. We might site quotes from Ellen White, but we do not accept it really. I am on a continuum of learning that principle.

Jesus uses a number of images that illustrate the tension between good and

evil, like the parable of the weeds and the wheat. Our field is a mixture of different things, and unless we learn how to see deeply, we don't know which is which, and we don't notice that God allows both good and bad to grow in the same field (Matthew 13:24-30). When Jesus was asked if a servant should pull out the weeds, Jesus says to "let them both grow together until the harvest" (13:30). Only at the harvest at the end of time will we see who/what God has decided is wheat and who/what is weed. In a certain way, He is saying it is none of our business to fully figure it out. This is really quite risky of God—and it takes tremendous courage on our part to trust God and ourselves.

We are all a mixture of weeds and wheat. We are simultaneously saint and sinner. That's the mystery of holding weeds and wheat together in our one field of life. It takes a lot more patience, compassion, forgiveness, and love than aiming for some idea of perfection. Acknowledging both the wheat and weeds in us keeps us from two extremes; from thinking too highly of ourselves, and from living assuming ourselves as terrible.

To avoid cynicism and negativity, you have to learn to accept and forgive this mixed bag of reality that you are—and everyone else is, too. If you don't, you'll likely become a very angry person. It's only in the last few years that I have been "working" on accepting the reality

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of the people and events in my life and in myself. Before, I denied them, or fought or claimed that God would change them. But change rarely came quickly, and in some cases/traits, not at all. Inner change that extends to the visible outer life is usually very slow. That is life. To accept the weeds doesn't mean that you say, "It's okay to be uncaring and evil." It means you have some real wisdom about yourself and acceptance of others. You can see your weeds, and acknowledge when you are not compassionate or caring. You have to name the weed as a weed. I'm not perfect; you're not perfect; the church

is not perfect; America is not perfect; the world is not perfect.

"If we must have perfection to be happy with ourselves, we have only two choices; we can blind ourselves to our own evil (and deny the weeds), or we can give up in discouragement (and deny the wheat). It takes uncommon humility to carry both the dark and the light side of things. The only true perfection available to humans is the honest acceptance of our imperfection. This is precisely what Divine Perfection can help us do; only God in us can love imperfect and

broken things. By ourselves, we largely fail." **

Learning how to love—which is our life's project—is quite simply learning to accept our messy reality. If you love anyone, then you have learned to accept them despite their faults. You see things you'd like to change in your partner, your children, yourself. By the unlimited grace of God within you, you are able to trust that the good is deeper than the bad, and usually well hidden. This is probably why so many of Jesus' parables are about lostness, seeking, and finding.

Never give up on the relationship.

Amen

"Seek and you shall find..." -- Matthew 7:7

"All things work together for good." —Romans 8:28

**Richard Rohr

Recipe of the Month by Arleen Johns

Vegetable Rice (3ABN- Nicole Braxton)

This rice is very good, and very easy!

- 2 C brown rice
- 3 C vegetable broth
- 2- 2 ½ C water

- 2 C peas
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 2 TBS Braggs liquid amino
- 1 tsp basil
- 2 tsp chicken seasoning
- 1 TBS garlic powder
- 1 onion sliced
- Salt to taste

If using parboiled rice reduce liquid to 4 or 4 ½ c

Brown the rice in a skillet dry-no oil for 2-3 minutes

Watch and stir so it does not burn

Mix all ingredients together in a baking dish

Cover with foil

Bake 1 hour 400 deg oven.

Notable Quotes selected by Bob Kondracki

Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.
~Ronald Reagan~

If the freedom of speech is taken away then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.
~George Washington~

'Emergencies' have always been the pretext on which the safeguards of individual liberty have been eroded.
~Friedrich August von Hayek~

Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!
~Patrick Henry~

Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect everyone who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately, nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force, you are inevitably ruined.
~Patrick Henry~

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.
~Thomas Jefferson~

Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it.
~Thomas Paine~

They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.
~Benjamin Franklin~

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The Children's Page by Tina Kondracki

Scripture Scavenger Hunt

Play this with friends or family members. Be warned however, this is a real challenge!



1-Then shall they ____ you up to be ____ and shall kill you: and ye shall be ____ of all nations in my ____ sake. (Matthew)

2-And the ____ descended, and the ____ came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that ____; and it fell not: for it was ____ upon a _____. (Matthew)

3- And he from ____ shall answer and say, ____ Trouble me not: the ____ is now ____, and my ____ are with me in ____; I cannot rise and give thee. (Luke)

4- and the first day of unleavened ____, when they killed the Passover, his disciples said unto him, ____ wilt thou that ____ go and ____ that thou ____ eat the Passover? (Mark)

5- and he said, ____ not nigh hither; put off they ____ from off thy feet, for the place ____ thou staidest is ____ ground. (Exodus)

6- ____ again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too ____ to have a _____. If I should say, I have an ____ also night, and should also be able ____ sons; (Ruth)

7- and in the midst of the seven ____ and one ____ unto the son of man, clothed with ____ down to the foot and girt about the paps with a ____ girdle (Revelation)

8- and the voice ____ I heard from ____ spake unto me ____, and said, go and take the ____ ____ which is opened in the ____ of the ____ which standeth upon the sea and upon the ____ (Revelation)

9- And shall go out to ____ the nations which are in the ____ ____ of the ____, Gog and ____, to gather ____ together to ____: the ____ of whom is as ____ of the _____. (Revelation)

10- if there come any ____ you, and bring not this ____, ____ him not into your ____, neither bid him God _____. (2 John)

Find the Answer

- 1- Who outran a chariot? (1 Kings 18:45-46)
- 2- Who had the biggest bed? (Deuteronomy 3:11)
- 3- God answered which dying man's prayer? (Isaiah 38:1-5)
- 4- Who did the donkey talk to? (Numbers 22:28-31)
- 5- Who was sent by God to put 185,000 Assyrian Soldiers to death over night? (Isaiah 37:26)
- 6- Who is the oldest man recorded in the bible? (Genesis 5:27)

Did You Know?

The Bible is the number one seller of books? The Bible is also the number one book to be stolen. This is because they are found in churches and hotel rooms.

Did you know that John 3:16 is quoted 56.1 million times on the internet as of February 2014. (Dave Clark)

Scavenger Hunt Verse References.

- 1. Matthew 24:9 2. Matthew 7:25 3. Luke 11:7 4. Mark 14:12 5. Exodus 3:5 6. Ruth 1:12
- 7. Revelation 1:13 8. Revelation 10:8 9. Revelation 20:8 10. 2 John 1:10