

Faith with a side-order of fun!

[Zechariah 9⁹⁻¹²; Psalm 145⁸⁻¹⁵] Romans 7¹⁵⁻²⁵; Matthew 11^{6-19.25-end}

*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carry heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest. [Matthew 11²⁸]*

Looking at what Paul says about Christians and sin sounds like offering a defence in court of being criminally insane! 'It wasn't my fault I sinned because my body wouldn't listen to me when I said no!' **For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do is not what I want to do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.... For I delight in the law of God in my innermost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.** It sounds like a parody – back to my school motto, *It wisnae me, it wis me!*

With this level of irresponsibility or incapability it is clear that we cannot be trusted to get by on our own. From the readings today two options of being 'hitched' to something that defines us. Jesus gives two options:

✘ Grown-up Religion:

This generation, it becomes clear, refers to the religious elite that were arrogantly confident that they were right and were condescending to those who couldn't keep the 'religious' rules.

Whilst I am perfectly well aware that the New Testament never expects people of faith to be happy, this sort of religious makes an art-form of misery and that look down the nose that makes it clear 'one does not belong!' So when John the Baptist came along he was wrong because he was too ascetic; then when Jesus came along he also was wrong because he was too hedonistic!

The trouble with those who think they are **wise and intelligent** is that they have evidently closed their hearts and their minds. Secure in knowing what is right they make people **weary** and force them to carry **heavy burdens**. It doesn't bring relief and it doesn't bring life!

✘ Childish Faith:

The image at the beginning is of **children** playing, as they do, at weddings and funerals – the **flute** is the instrument of joy and **wailing** the expression of grief: the **wise and intelligent** refuse to play, perhaps believing such things to be beneath their dignity.

When Jesus talks about the **babes** that are entrusted with a faith that brings one alive he is referring to those who were humble, uncomplicated people – the people that others can regard as insignificant, but who are, so often, free from false perceptions and self-aggrandisement and open to new things and willing to embrace hope.

What Jesus invites us to, in stark contrast to religious obligation, is to partner ourselves with him: **take my yoke**, certainly, but with the challenge that we **learn from [him]**. When we learn his approach to life – his gentleness, humility and fun – we relax into a faith that isn't hard work!

If you accept Jesus assertion that there are no secrets between the Father and the Son and that Jesus is the only reliable access to the Father, then it makes sense to **yoke** ourselves with him. Instead of a **heavy burden** inciting **weariness**, we are promised **rest for our souls**, but with a great deal of childish fun thrown in! Neither do we have to engage in the madness of excusing sin – we simply accept forgiveness from sin and freedom from guilt.