

## Bible reading Matthew 11:16-19,25-30

### It's no yoke

THIS WEEK WE EXPLORE THE CONTRAST BETWEEN RULES AND THE WAY OF LIFE JESUS REVEALS.

This week we examine Jesus' invitation to lay down our burdens and take on his way of life instead. Religious leaders in Jesus' time had many rules for people to follow and you would be excluded from worship if you missed any. Jesus offers a far more grace-filled way for us to follow.



# WALK

Go for a walk – perhaps with a friend or family member – and simply enjoy being out and about. If/when you can, sit or lie down, look up. Isn't the sky big? Now, close your eyes and listen... Listen to far away noises. Listen to close sounds. Listen to your breathing. Listen to the still, small voice of the creator. Use pencils and paper to draw anything you heard; make it as literal or as abstract as you like. Finish by hearing your own voice as a part of creation, declaring, 'Here I am God, all that I am, I'm yours'.

# Pray



Pray in a way that may not fit your preconceptions of the 'rules' of praying. Lie down and relax on your duvets or some pillows or similar. Listen to the track 'How Can I Keep From Singing', Audrey Assad on *Inheritance*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li2hddmy63U>

As you do so, continue to relax and try to feel – or keep reminding yourself about – the lightness of Jesus' yoke. From time to time say 'thank you' to Jesus that his burden is so light. Afterwards, spend a few moments thinking about what you have learned or discovered about God/Jesus by doing this.

## Bible notes



Jesus has been visited by messengers from John the Baptist and has praised his forerunner; he then offers an almost parabolic assessment of the audience that has critiqued the ministry of both men. He likens them to children playing music – happy tunes did not get the crowd dancing; dirges did not make people mourn. In short, this crowd accused both Jesus and John (no doubt egged on by their religious and community leaders) of not being what they expected. John was demonic and deranged; Jesus was a drunk and a glutton. Jesus suggests that both he and John should be judged on what they have actually done (Matthew 11.19c).

Then his tone seems to soften. Looking at the crowd he sees people weighed down by the expectations of their leaders and says he will give them refreshment, rest, life, adventure, and company. He offers peace and the kind of leadership that will result in the formation of a community where all are looked after and all will find fulfilment. There are political overtones to these words. This is not offering a withdrawal from life, nor something purely personal. Jesus is not just offering a spirituality that will help us navigate a hostile world; he is offering us a role in changing that world to fit the values of God's kingdom: a truly fulfilling life for each one of us. He is inviting us into partnership in the fulfilment of God's plans and purposes. What is wonderful is that this yoke is not ill-fitting, it doesn't weigh heavy or dig into our shoulders. Rather it is light and tailor-made to fit each one of us who answers his call.

## First impressions

- What burdens would you like to lay down?
- How would you respond to someone who said that Christianity was all about following rules?
- How can you support others who are finding things tough right now?



## A prayer to action

God, we thank you for Jesus' revelation of a different life – another way to live, to pray, to love; and we thank you for the community of care to which we belong – the Church and the life it encourages us to live. May we be one with you, one with Christ and the Holy Spirit, aspiring and enabled to live more fully, day by day, in your name. **Amen.**

# DRAW



Using coloured pencils/pens and plain paper – or if you have it, you could use the Roots colouring sheet – enjoy some mindful colouring or drawing. That is, while you are drawing and colouring, let your mind wander freely, thinking about the opportunities you might find to rest with God in the week ahead. If any cares or troubles come to mind, imagine bringing them to God and handing them over, so that you can rest.