

9am Wesley - Pentecost 4 – 6<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Reading: Matthew 11:25-30

Theme: “Being more child-like”

### Introduction

Almost a fortnight ago Annette and I went car shopping with our grandson. We had a pretty good idea what we were going to buy but wanted to check it out again. Our first new car in over 20 years, so we were quite excited. Having talked to the salesman, we decided to buy one of the cars on the showroom floor. As we walked out of the glass encased showroom our four year old grandson said to Annette, “Grannie, how are they going to get the car out of there? Will they have to take it apart to get it through the door and then put it back together again?” He had obviously been pondering this thought for a while and had decided the only way to get the vehicle out the door was to dis-assemble the vehicle. We went back in and got Joshua to ask Blake, the salesman, the same question. Blake was delightful with Joshua and showed him how the glass panels canter-levered to open up a section of the showroom floor so cars could be driven in and out. A wonderful question from a four year old with an amazing solution that he had come up with himself. While reality was slightly different, it was amazing to see things through a child’s eye and be allowed into the processes of Joshua’s thinking!

### Today’s Gospel – Matthew 11:25-30

Today’s Gospel from Matthew also talks about being child-like in some areas of our faith. Jesus had been talking with John the Baptist’s disciples earlier in Matthew 11. We are told that “As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John:” so Matthew 11:7a tells us. Hence the conversation here at the end of Matthew 11 is to the crowd, but probably still has John the Baptist in mind as well. This adds a different layer of understanding to the passage as well when we read it in this light.

“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. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.’ Matthew 11:25/26

Sometimes we are proud of our learning and the wisdom we have learnt. The clergy are no different – my five years at university and Ockert’s even longer time. Part of who we are and what supposedly we know or at least what some people may think we know! We can easily become academic snobs and lose faith in God and insights to be found in the simple things, the child-like things that are there but we fail to see because of our pride, our striving for knowledge and not seeing the things of God.

The words “you have hidden these things..” probably pertains to the ministry of Jesus, who he was and is and his mission to all people. Because you are ‘wise and learned’ doesn’t necessarily enable you to see the things of God. Jesus is probably poking fun at the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, who had all this learning and wisdom but couldn’t see that he was from God. Yet the simple, everyday folk along with a whole bunch of outcasts of society (the child-like in faith terms) accepted him far more than did the religious leaders of his day. Quite ironic, it is those simple followers of Jesus that have more insight than the wise and the learned. Some things don’t change.

I have been humbled on many occasions by and with the simple yet incredibly deep faith of so many people I have supposedly been ‘pastor’ to. Whether it has been with the sick in hospital, with children and youth, in the military and in various parishes there are

people of immense faith, who do not have anything like my theological training, that leave me far behind in faith stakes, in wisdom and in living out their faith.

I remember in my first Parish, in Burra in the mid-north of South Australia, Annette and I were doing our shopping in the local green grocer's shop called Boulderstone's, one Saturday morning, when a little boy yanked at his mother's skirt and said in a loud child's whisper, "Mum, Mum there is God!" pointing at me. Not quite true! But Jesus says ".... and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Matthew 11:27b

May we be part of those who have had Jesus reveal the graciousness of God to us. The last few verses of Matthew 11:28-30 have the imagery of the easy 'yoke' and the 'light' burden. Both of these thoughts are the opposite to reality. They appear to be crazy ideas as the yoke was that part of the harness around an oxen's neck that was used to harness the oxen for the hard work of tilling the ground before a crop was seeded. A burden is just that – something that is difficult, hard to do or carry with you. We use the phrase 'a person seems burdened with their life or their lot in life'. It is not easy – it is jolly hard work. Yet here Jesus says to those who follow him:

"Come to me, all you who are burdened, and I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for ....my yoke is  
easy and my burden is light."

Not what we would expect. Jesus is saying he knows the burdens of life we often carry and he is saying 'Hey share them with me and I'll make them lighter, more manageable.'

This section is a paraphrase of a section of Scripture found in the Hebrew Scriptures from the Book of Sirach, a book of Wisdom writings. 'Yoking up with Jesus' sounds pretty ludicrous in one sense, but maybe this is a challenge to find a way to come closer to God and in so doing to unburden ourselves. Also to find some peace for our souls. Quite an interesting concept. In and through this the burdens of life may be lessened as we share them with our Saviour.

The lesson of the yoke is learning how to get insync with Jesus, whose presence balances the weight of pressures. When what we are going through seems beyond our ability to carry on, that is exactly the time when faith is calling us to surrender our way and trust God's way.

In a sense this is the call to a child-like faith but not a childish faith.

Proverbs 3:5-6 puts it like this:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

### Let us pray

Loving God, we thank you that we are called to be yoked to Christ.

This is not a heavy burden but rather sits easy, like a guiding hand upon our shoulder.

May we have child-like faith that shows us the greatness of your love for us and the joy and beauty of your creation. May we give you thanks for companions on the journey who share the load and multiply the pleasure. Let our lives be a prayer of thanks to you, our loving God. Amen.