



July 6 • 2008

Focus Scripture

**Matthew 11:16–19,
25–30**

Additional Scriptures

Genesis 24:34–38,

42–49, 58–67

Psalms 45:10–17 or

Song of Solomon 2:8–13

Romans 7:15–25a

All-wise God, help us to discern the times in which we live, and to live faithfully within them. Bless us as we serve in the responsibilities you gently lay upon our shoulders, and lead us to find our rest and strength in you. Amen.

Sacred Rest

Jesus beckons all in the community of disciples to seek moments of sacred rest. When we labour without recognizing Christ among others and even within us, we may overlook the peace that God promises to provide. The readings for today invite us to trust God, that we may know wholeness and peace.

**Focus Scripture: Matthew 11:16–19,
25–30**

In ancient Hebrew tradition, “wisdom” had less to do with intellect and more to do with discernment evidenced in the conduct of daily life. Wisdom in Judaism was relational – a gift of God exercised in community with others. Matthew has earlier brought those strands of wisdom into his emphasis upon faith calling for expression in both word and deed. In this passage, Jesus teaches from that same tradition. To say that “Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (v. 19) is to say that the way events transpire will reveal who has made wise decisions.

The impetus for this teaching on wisdom is the current generation’s lack of wisdom, shown by their response to John the Baptizer and Jesus. Both offer a way to move into the reign of God, and both are rejected. Jesus uses the analogy of children at play to make this point. John’s ministry of repentance went unheeded by those who did not discern a time of mourning. They judged John’s fasting, a symbol of repentance, as demonic. Jesus’ ministry of proclaiming the joy of God’s sovereign realm went unheeded by those who did not discern a time of celebration. They judged Jesus’ fellowship with “sinners and tax collectors” as the acts of a “glutton and drunkard.” In Deuteronomy 21:20, such charges merited stoning to death.

Verses 25–27 have at times been used by some church leaders to claim a special knowledge possessed only by some authorities. In times of disagreement, it can be tempting to identify oneself with the “infants,” and label one’s opponents as the “wise and intelligent” whom God has passed over. Church members continue to wrestle with what it means to truly understand Jesus’ message.

Jesus’ promise of an “easy” or well-fitting yoke – a device that makes it less tiring for animals or people to carry a heavy load – is best heard in the context of the controversies about the Sabbath that immediately follow in Matthew 12. The Sabbath, a day for rest and renewal, had become burdened with traditions for its keeping. The yoke of Jesus, which may be imagined as living in the way of God, is “easy,” a word whose meaning runs close to “kindness.” Jesus offers himself as the source of strength for the disciples and the source of rest from their burdens.

Rest from one’s burdens is a common theme in two other passages. In **Genesis 24:34–38, 42–49, 58–67**, Abraham’s servant describes the weighty assignment given him to find a wife for Isaac. The servant places that burden before God in prayer, and receives answer. A vexing inner conflict troubles Paul in **Romans 7:15–25a**. Jesus’ generation could not discern the right thing to do; Paul also struggles to do that which is good. Paul concludes this somewhat convoluted passage with a declaration of where Paul finds rest from his burden: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

What makes it possible to come to God with that which weighs us down? The opening verse of **Psalms 45:10–17** anticipates Jesus’ invitation of “come to me.” “Come away with me” is the invitation to sacred rest in **Song of Solomon 2:8–13**. By the grace of God, we may.



In Christ, those who follow God’s leading find it easier to carry on the work of serving with a yoke that does not weary and a rest that renews. In what ways does Christ strengthen you to serve? Where do you find sacred rest? How are you able to share the burdens of other disciples and lead them to rest?

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