

The title for today's message is: **Bearing the Yoke of Jesus**

Jesus said: **Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me,**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Tension, stress, overwork, exhaustion, fatigue, worn out, long-hours, no rest. Sound familiar?

This may sound like your daily work routine or it may sound like your struggle searching for the truth and answers to unsolved questions.

This is what you find when you try to tackle every problem without help.
This is what you find when you look to yourself for answers.

Today's message is one much more hopeful than that. It's a message of relief that Jesus gives when we rely on Him for our strength and our peace.

It's a message about taking the yoke of Jesus willingly, walking through life side by side with Him and following the leadership that He gives us daily.

In our gospel lesson for today, Jesus talks about carrying our burdens and giving us rest. And here He uses the idea of a yoke to accomplish this.

You know when I think of a yoke, I think of hard, manual labor. But instead of work, Jesus refers to a yoke as providing relief.

But how can such a difficult farming tool be used to reduce the weight of our burdens we bear today?

Look, Jesus loved to use the ordinary things in the world in order to explain more difficult things or concepts.

It was quite common for Jesus to use symbols especially from agriculture to explain His ministry.

And today is no different. Now using the example of a common yoke, he has a message for all of us today.

He wants us to take His yoke and submit to His lead, allowing Him to bear the weight of our burdens.

For those of you not familiar with a yoke, it's the piece of wood attached between two animals to allow tools such as plows to be pulled by a team of oxen or horses.

The two animals work much more effectively than one, because their able to combine their strength as they pull in the same direction.

They can work together to pull loads that one animal could not handle alone.

The yoke makes the connection between the two animals so that they work together toward a common goal.

Look Jesus wants us to work together and walk through life together. Just as a yoke keeps a team in synch working together.

Here Jesus wants us to follow the same path and go in the same direction as He wills us.

We can't go our own way. We have to allow ourselves to follow His lead. The yoke of Jesus shows us which way to go and how to lead our lives.

Through His actions, He directs our path each and every day. And all we have to do is to submit to Him not only as our Lord and Savior but also as our teacher and leader.

For example; a strong young athlete was wading waist deep in the shallow part of a lake.

When suddenly as he stepped off an underwater ledge he plunged fifteen feet beneath the surface of the water.

After several seconds he bobbed to the top of the water flailing his arms and gasping for breath.

A lifeguard attentively watched the situation from a nearby bank when a friend of the struggling young athlete grabbed the lifeguard by the arm and cried out, "Bob can't swim, you've got to help him."

The lifeguard continued to watch the struggling swimmer, but remained unmoved as Bob continued kicking and splashing wildly.

The young man's friend furiously yelled at the lifeguard, "If you won't go after him, I will."

Calmly but firmly the lifeguard said, "No one can help him yet. I'll help him when he's ready for my help."

After a couple more minutes the young athlete stopped his struggles. As his body became limp.

The patient lifeguard suddenly dove into the water, swam out to the young man, and brought him to shore, it was a successful rescue.

Later the young mans friend asked the lifeguard, "Why did you wait so long to help my friend."

The lifeguard responded, "As long as Bob was trying to save himself there was nothing I could do for him.

If I swam out to him he might have grabbed me and pulled me under with him. Only when he was weak, exhausted and had given up was I able to save him safely."

Now, the story of the struggling swimmer is so much like our own struggle through life.

If we continue to struggle on our own actions and deeds, we will get nowhere and may even hurt our chances at living.

When the swimmer finally submitted, the life guard was there to rescue him.

Like the swimmer, if we fight against the will of God, we'll get nowhere and only tire ourselves out.

But, Jesus is there patiently waiting for us to submit to Him turning over all our burdens to Him.

He's waiting there to show us the right path while trusting in His leadership rather than depending on his own efforts.

Look, in the New Testament times, to take on a yoke referred to someone submitting to and becoming a student of the teacher.

They were yoking themselves to someone else's authority. When we submit to Jesus, He becomes our teacher, and we become His students.

By being yoked to Jesus and allowing Him to lead, we're able to go where He wants us to go.

Cooperate as we are connected to His rule, and learn from Him as we follow the path and direction He set out for us.

But, it's more than just following rules and learning from Him. By taking the yoke of Jesus we have a clear path, the right path for our lives.

We can rest in the strength of Jesus as He carries us through the burdens of our life. And when we stumble, He's right there to pick us up.

When the weight on our shoulders is too much for us to bear, he's right there to pick us up and allow us to continue on our journey together.

When we have no place else to turn, He's right there to support us in our time of need.

A man, carrying a bag of potatoes on his back, was asked by a skeptic: "How do you know you're saved?"

The man took a few steps and then dropped the bag. Then he said: "How do I know I dropped the bag?"

I haven't looked around." "No," replied the man. You can tell by the lessening of the weight."

"Yes," replied the man, "that's how I know I'm saved. I've lost the guilty feeling of sin and sorrow, and have found peace and satisfaction in my Lord and Savior."

Allow yourself to be yoked to Jesus and He will lead you down the path of salvation.

Allow yourself to be yoked to Jesus and he will lead you and teach you how to survive the burdens of your life.

Allow yourself to be yoked to Jesus and He will bear your burdens for you, support you when you need to be supported and provide relief from the everyday stresses of life.

When you're over your head with burdens, remember, they are still under the feet of your Lord, Jesus Christ.

And He pulls us from the difficulties of our life as well as sets our life right with Him.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.