

+WEEKLY REFLECTION

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



Jesus' Invitation of Rest

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-end

At the start of chapter 11, John the Baptist sends a message from his prison cell, 'Are you the one?' Jesus tells John's messengers to report what they see and hear: '...the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have good news brought to them.' (11:5)

Healings, resurrection and good news for the poor – surely everyone will respond with joyful acceptance. Sadly, no. Jesus goes on to note how he is met with indifference and rejection by some. In verse 16, Jesus describes how the leaders of the time refused to dance or mourn when the music played or wailing was heard. In verses 20-24, he notes that the towns and cities where he performed 'deeds of power' have failed to repent.

In contrast to the rejection by 'the wise and intelligent' people, in verses 25-26, Jesus goes on to talk about those who accept him. Children joyfully accept; it is those whom the world regards as insignificant who discover who Jesus, the Son, and God the Father are.

To those who are 'weary and carrying heavy burdens,' Jesus gives a wonderful invitation to find rest. Many of his listeners were weighed down by trying to fulfil the legalistic demands of their religious leaders. The rest that Jesus offers involves wearing his yoke which is easy, good and kind. Yokes made heavy loads easier to carry.

Jesus, who grew up observing Joseph the carpenter at work, would probably have seen how yokes were made to fit well. With Jesus, there is nothing ill-fitting about his yokes for he is 'gentle and humble in heart'. Jesus, the Son of God, echoes the words of God the Father, in Jeremiah 6:16: 'This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."'

John's question is answered with a resounding, yes – Jesus is the one. He offers new life and a promise of a kingdom where all tears will be wiped away and death will be no more; mourning crying and pain will be no more. (Revelation 21:4). He invites us to come to him and find rest.

Our fast-paced and complex world increasingly makes us weary. Lasting rest can only be found in Jesus. May we respond humbly knowing that the one who invites us is the Son of God who walks alongside us and shoulders our burdens with gentleness.

Rev Joy Rushton

Being Witnesses Manager and Assistant Curate at Ribbleton Parish Church