

In The Name of Our Creator. The Son Our Saviour and Redeemer. And the Triune Spirit who is with Us Always. Are you the one Who is to come, or are we to wait for another? John's disciples ask Jesus at the beginning of Matthew ch 11. John, who so clearly recognised who Jesus was when John baptised Jesus, is now having doubts. Who can blame him? The great judgement John announced has not materialised, the corrupt are still in power, and John is in Herod's prison. Jesus tells John's disciples to tell John what they have heard and seen, the blind receiving sight, the lame walking, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hearing, and the poor receiving God's Love, in action by Jesus. Although not the mighty judgement John envisioned these are surely signs given by Jesus to bring God's people back into the relationship to the One True God. After John's disciples leave, Jesus speaks to the crowds about John the baptiser with words of high praise. No one who has ever lived is greater than John the Baptist, Jesus says {ch11,vr11.} He is the fulfillment of the prophecy, that Elijah sent by God to prepare the way for the coming of God's Son. God's message given to Elijah that the Spirit will be born by a Mother. Jesus came to show God's Love and to bring them back into a powerful relationship with the One True God. Jesus tells us that the problem with his generation, is that they listen neither to John or Jesus. John's austere lifestyle led people to accuse him of having a demon, while Jesus habit of eating and drinking with sinners earned Jesus a bad reputation. Jesus generation finds reason to take offense at both John and Jesus so they do not listen to either. Jesus compares them and says they are like children in the marketplace who cannot decide whether they want to play wedding games or funeral games and end up playing neither. Yet Jesus says to this generation {Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds} Jesus own deeds as described in ch 11,v 5 give evidence that Jesus embodies and reveals the love of the One True God. That Jesus is the one who will come, and the one who will bring the people back into a relationship with the One True God. In Matthew's Gospel we miss ch11:20 to 24]. and our Gospel reading restarts at verse 25, with Jesus praying and thanking God because God has hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to the infants?, the wise and the intelligent who was Jesus talking about? I would suggest that it is especially the religious leaders and maybe the Romans, whom Jesus often rebuke because of their self-importance and hypocrisy. The scribes and pharisees and Sadducees, pride themselves on being learned in the law, yet fail to understand the basics of Justice Mercy, and Faith. They repeatedly reject Jesus and conspire against Jesus. Their action was against the one True God. The infants have been given the Spirit of God, Jesus tells the people, I have revealed the Spirit to them to the infants, who are the infants ?, they are the poor in Spirit, the meek, the merciful, the persecuted, all who Jesus calls blessed. It is God's Spirit that will act in ways that adults cannot understand because they will not listen to what Jesus has to say, that he has been sent by the Father. After praying for the infants poor in Spirit, Jesus ask the Father to help the adults, {come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heaven burden, I will give rest}. Who is Jesus talking about?, it is of course the common people. Jesus goes on and chastise the scribes , pharisees and Sadducees, because they lay a heavy burden on the people, which is hard to bear, it is not the law, but how they interpret and practice the law to control the people of Israel. To all those labouring under harsh religious and political systems, Jesus says "Come to me and I will give you rest and I will restore your relationship with the One True God." The religious leaders in Matthew's story are complicit with the Roman rulers in maintaining the imperial system. The common people labour wearily under occupation, in which the ruling elite secure wealth, status, and power at the expense of the poor. Jesus rejects this social order as contrary to God's will. Jesus says. You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your Servant, and who ever wishes to be first among you must also be a Servant, just as the Son came not to be served, but to serve God's people. Jesus then invites the weary "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in Spirit, and you will find rest for your Spirit. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30. these familiar words, recited at ordinations as well as funerals, strike a new tone. Jesus teachings now turn to direct invitation to our discipleship, signalling a kind of turning point in the Gospel, Jesus personally invites us into the drama. Despite all the warnings about rejection and suffering. Jesus speaks of a discipleship characterised by rest, light burdens, and an easy or good yoke. Light burdens and easy yokes appear oxymoronic. They produce a tension in our understanding of the Gospel of Matthew. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light ch 11v 29-30. the yoke was a familiar symbol of burden, bearing, oppression, and subjugation.

Yokes were laid on the necks and shoulders of the oxen and also on the prisoners of war and slaves. But yoke was also used metaphorically with positive connotations, In the wisdom teachings of Sirach ch 51v 26, tell the Israelites to put your neck under her yoke, and let your souls receive instruction, and as a rabbinic metaphor for the difficult but joyous task of obedience to the Torah. But what is this yoke that Jesus offering to us, you and I today. In his teachings and actions, his relationship with Father. I ask you my friends how is your relationship with The One True God, as we sit in church, today we are weary, we have a lot to be concerned about in our lives, our families this world, and all the people around us, Jesus says, come to me, and I will give you Spiritual rest. My brothers and sisters it is not that Jesus invites us to a life of ease, to follow him will be full of risks and challenges, God calls you and I to be Servants and our life [Spirit] to be yoked to Jesus.