

In Sunday's Gospel reading from Matthew, we hear these familiar words from Jesus: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." Many of the Scripture commentaries I have read about these verses say that Jesus is comparing Himself with the Pharisees and scribes who put burdens on the people with regards to obeying the Law, without offering any compassion or help. Jesus is offering comfort and mercy and rest.

For many of us today, the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders of His time is not part of our experience. But we are invited by Jesus to come to Him, and I think it can be helpful to look at these verses more closely.

"all you who labor..." – As I was reflecting on these words, it came to me about how many ways we are often judged by the world, and what we do in response. Very often we find ourselves evaluating our own worth according to what other people think, or by what or how much we do, or by what we possess, or by whom we are with. And so we can spend a lot of our energy trying to make others (even God) like us, or trying to validate our worth. Sometimes we resort to putting others down in order to feel better about ourselves. Sometimes we work very hard trying to make money or have power, so we can feel we are "somebody." And sometimes we even disrespect ourselves in order to be "loved." But isn't there more to life than that?

"and are burdened..." – Sometimes we carry heavy burdens. Some of us are in our addictions. Some of us are grieving. Others are burdened by unemployment. Others are not only caring for their children, but also their parents. Others have had to bring up their grandchildren. There are still others of us who are under a lot of stress, trying to juggle several things at once. And we can wonder if there might be any relief for us.

"Come to me...and I will give you rest." – For those who are trying so hard to validate their worth, come to Jesus, and know that your worth comes from the fact that God loves you very much. You need not be false to who you are and *whose* you are in order to be accepted by others. Those who are real friends will not require that of you, and it is God who has made the sacrifice for your salvation, not the world. Trust in the love of God for you.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves." – If we are willing to come to Jesus and know His love for us, we become willing to do as He did. We are willing to see with His eyes. For there are so many in our world who are also burdened. So many burdened by poverty and hunger and disease. There are so many deprived of necessities and basic human rights. So many burdened by war and conflict and violence and even attempts at genocide. So many being exploited and even sold into slavery. We need to learn from Jesus, who showed mercy and compassion, and loved His enemies, while at the same time

proclaiming the need for justice. And as we follow Him in loving others, and working for peace, we will find “rest” for ourselves that the world cannot give.

May God continue to bless us all, and may we come to Jesus, and find rest in Him.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP