

## “A Good Trade” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Advent Midweek 3 – December 15, 2021

- I. **Matthew 11:28–30** – previously read
- II. **How heavy is your backpack?**
  - a. A few years ago, people started noticing how heavy backpacks were getting for school kids.
    - i. All the books required for classes needed to be brought home, and studies confirmed that kids were carrying too much weight.
    - ii. “Recent research has determined that children should not carry more than 10-15 percent of their total weight in their backpack. A follow-up question was posed in the *New York Times* asking what will happen to the spinal development of those children who carry over the 15 percent limit. The experts replied: “It will affect posture and may lead to serious back pain.”<sup>1</sup>
  - b. How big of a burden are you carrying around on your back?
    - i. Is it more than the 15 percent maximum?
    - ii. What are the effects of carrying around these burdens over time?
  - c. I don’t know about you, but for me, carrying around a burden is a source of pride... in other words, if I can carry a burden with grace and dignity, it seems better that way.
    - i. “Oh your car got stolen?” – Yes, but it’s no big deal, stuff like that just happens
    - ii. “I’m so sorry your kids got Covid” – Well, everyone is probably gonna get it sooner or later, they’ll be fine
    - iii. “Oh goodness, your house burned down” – ah that’s ok, we have a shed out back we can live in...
  - d. Maybe you’ve experienced some heavy burdens and felt compelled to carry them on your own.
    - i. How many of you have a loved one with health problems that concern you deeply, but whenever anyone asks you how things are going you say everything is just great.
    - ii. Some of you might have a child or family member who is struggling with drugs... or relationships... or with their faith in Jesus... and you just tuck that away like a lead weight in the backpack of your life.
    - iii. Perhaps you have a health concern, depression, personal sin, or struggles of your own and you put on a smile for others, but deep down it’s no fun
  - e. In all these things, we can spend a great deal of our emotional energy stewing and worrying... and yet God wants you to share these burdens.
    - i. Why oh why do we insist on gripping these burdens tightly instead of opening up and letting them go?

- ii. Just try this exercise as an example... grip both your hands tightly and feel the level of stress rise in your chest... then – open your hands and breathe out – notice how that changes your feelings?
    - iii. We often hold tightly to our burdens and problems, but God wants us to share them with Him...
  - f. Listen to 1 Peter 5 - “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting [loading] all your anxieties [cares] on Him, because He cares [about] you.” (1 Pet 5:6-7)
    - i. All too often our pride gets in the way of letting go.
    - ii. We are not humble when we try to manage everything on our own.
- III. **Jesus says come to Me with your heavy load...**
  - a. Granted, Jesus is talking about the people who have been weighed down with the religious law – and the many regulations expected of them to be right with God.
  - b. However, in the big picture, Jesus makes the point that we have a definite place to go... a definite place to release our burdens and weariness.
  - c. First, Jesus says, “Come here!”
    - i. It’s gentle... but it’s a command to bring the weight to Him.
    - ii. Drop the attitude... drop the pride and ego... and come here.
    - iii. Stop with the, “I got this...” and come here.
  - d. Once we get over the pride and come to Jesus, He says, “I will give you rest.” (vs 28)
    - i. Built into the very creation is the 7<sup>th</sup> day of rest
    - ii. None of us were ever meant to go without stopping – and none of us can carry a heavy load forever... at least without help.
    - iii. Can you use rest?
      - 1. You may not need physical rest – but what about your mind and spirit?
      - 2. Sometimes these burdens can far exceed the weight of physical work and energy.
  - e. Jesus then says to take His yoke – or be tied to Him... and learn.
    - i. Being yoked to Jesus is being connected to Him and willing to learn
    - ii. In many traditions, yoking yourself to a certain teacher meant that you trusted them to guide and lead you in the right path and teachings
    - iii. Through faith, we trust Jesus implicitly to be our guide and leader... and He continues to teach us even today through His Word
    - iv. Not only that, but being yoked together helps us bear more.
      - 1. I read about draft horses pulling heavy weight, and this quote is interesting – “When it comes to pulling a large amount of weight, it is better done together. You would assume if one horse is capable of pulling 6,000 pounds, then an equal pair is able to pull 12,000 pounds. However, they would actually be

able to pull upwards of 18,000 pounds, as horses are able to pull more together than apart individually. Pairing horses actually improves their load capability.”<sup>2</sup>

2. So, being yoked to another person is a huge advantage in carrying a burden... but that multiplies beyond measure when it comes to being yoked to God Himself.

IV. **Gentle, lowly, rest, easy, light**...(Matthew 11:29-30)

- a. These are the words Jesus uses in connection to Him.
- b. When we are yoked to Jesus, He takes all the heavy burdens and makes them so much more manageable.
- c. I don't want any confusion here today though – because the very first connection we have to our God is when He comes to us...
  - i. The Holy Spirit, through our Baptism and the Word of God, works a miracle called faith... and by grace we are able to receive all the treasures and inheritance that God has to offer – Forgiveness, life and salvation!
  - ii. By grace, Jesus went to the cross... so all that pride – that lack of trust in Him – that stubborn holding on to things could be forgiven and taken away.
  - iii. We don't work out some kind of deal with God and agree to accept Him into our lives – He does all the work of bringing us to faith.
- d. And yet, through that gift of faith, a whole new life of spiritual, emotional and physical choices opens up!

V. **In faith, we have choices to bear the burdens... or trade them in**...

- a. As Christmas looms and the troubles seem to get magnified, we can hold on and struggle by ourselves... or make a good trade.
  - i. Through faith, we can share the burden with our Lord.
  - ii. Through faith, we can share the burden with our fellow Christians
  - iii. Through faith, we can lean into Jesus, casting our anxieties – our cares upon Him.
- b. The trials and troubles will not go away, but the peace we get from sharing the load is incredible!
  - i. Lighten the load with a decision to share it... as difficult as it may be to loosen your grip on things – it is a godly thing to do.
  - ii. Take those burdens and heavy weights and turn to Jesus, where you receive freedom, rest, and peace – now that's a pretty good trade!  
Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Valerie Lavigne, DC, "Weight limit recommendations in backpack use for school-aged children," JCCPOnline (Accessed 11/19/20); C. Claiborne Ray, "Heavy Backpacks on Little Backs," *The New York Times* (10-13-14)

<sup>2</sup> <https://horseyhooves.com/how-much-weight-can-a-horse-pull/>