

Words for the Weary

[Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30](#)



How are you today? The easy, reflex response is “Oh, fine, thanks”, but that may not be the truth. We can say those words to be polite, to keep our sense of distance between ourselves and others, and possibly to convince ourselves that they are true.

This period of lockdown has been especially challenging for many, in a variety of ways. Caring for other people during this time has often meant sacrificing the time and joy of being with them; grandparents being unable to see their grandchildren, friends unable to be present at birthdays or funerals. Other people have found themselves having to do more caring at home for loved ones without support than ever before. Parents have had to become home educators almost overnight.

The inability to go where you would like, when you like and with those whom you love is exhausting. There have been many losses and much grief, personal and corporate, which remain as yet unexpressed. Those working in key parts of our society: healthcare workers, hauliers, shop staff, public transport drivers, the emergency services, education and social work to name just some, have been at the forefront of keeping us going, often at considerable cost to themselves and their families.

And it's not over yet. The situation in Leicester reminds us that even as many are looking forward to going to the pub, having their hair cut and returning to their places of worship, the risk of a second spike of infection is clear. Here at All Saints', whilst the church is open for private prayer, we are weighing up the burden of opening for public services very carefully.

As the restrictions on the general public are eased, some people are looking at the changes with great fear, while others, weary of being shut in and shut out from their leisure and wider society, are responding energetically, with less thought for themselves or others. The burdens shift, but we are still heavily laden with the wear and tear of these long weeks and with the uncertain prospects ahead for ourselves, our nation and the world.

It's OK not to be OK.

Jesus encourages us to recognise that we will have times where we are “weary and burdened.” (v. 28) Feeling weary and burdened is not an abnormal state, but we need to think about how we respond to it.

Jesus’ invitation is simple: “Come to me.” Rather than shouldering the load on our own, he calls us to come to him. Recovery from weariness needs a period of rest. Are you feeling tired and burdened with cares for yourself or others today? Even if only for a few minutes, whether in stillness indoors or out in the fresh air, Jesus calls us to come to him with those things and put them down before him.



A simple way to help yourself lay those burdens down can be to pick up a pebble. Let it rest in the palm of your hand. Allow your fingers to curl round the pebble. Think of those things that are weighing you down. It can be helpful to name them specifically. Allow the pebble to gradually warm to your touch. As the pebble warms, ask Jesus to take away those things that are weighing you down. Finally, once the stone is warm, set it down. If you have a cross at home, you may find it helpful to set it down before that cross, remembering that we can leave our burdens there.

Jesus does not say that we will be without burdens to carry. Life is not like that. If we are following him, however, we are called to take on the “yoke” and “burden” which he gives

us. However, rather than being impossible to carry, he says, “my yoke is easy and my burden is light”. What picture do you have in your mind’s eye of this yoke, and the burden of which Jesus speaks? How do you respond to them? Be assured that Jesus is not simply swapping one load for another. The yoke that Jesus sets on us is there to remind us that we are called to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and to walk in step with him. Our burden is the one we took on in our baptism: to bear witness to his love and life in the world.

Collect for 4th Sunday after Trinity

Gracious Father,
by the obedience of Jesus
you brought salvation to our wayward world:
draw us into harmony with your will,
that we may find all things restored in him,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rev'd Vicky Barrett