

## Treadmill vs Jesus

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

(Jesus said) You people are like children sitting in the market and shouting to each other,

"We played the flute, but you wouldn't dance!

We sang a funeral song, but you wouldn't mourn!"

John the Baptist didn't go around eating and drinking, and you said, "That man has a demon in him!" But the Son of Man goes around eating and drinking, and you say, "That man eats and drinks too much! He's even a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Yet Wisdom is shown to be right by what it does.

At that time Jesus said: My Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I'm grateful you hid all this from wise and educated people and showed it to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that's what pleased you.

My Father has given me everything, and he's the only one who knows the Son. The only one who truly knows the Father is the Son. But the Son wants to tell others about the Father, so they can know him too.

If you're tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I'll give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I'm gentle and humble, and you'll find rest. This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light.

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Dear Friends, we've all experienced the power of expectations.

As we're coming back into church buildings to worship - what do we expect? Are we expecting a great flood of positive emotion? Or are we disappointed because we really enjoyed the freedom of worshipping when it suited us?

Expectations are powerful. They come in a myriad of shapes and sizes and affect us in equally diverse ways.

Expectations can be empowering. When others have high expectations of us, we can be empowered to make sure we don't disappoint them. Empowered to strive to live up to those expectations.

Expectations can be disempowering. When others have low expectations of us we can be disempowered and make sure we don't disappoint them. If you tell me I'm useless then just watch how useless I can be.

Today's reading is about expectations.

The mega-context of this reading involves the Jewish peoples' longing for a Messiah. They'd been waiting and hoping, dreaming and planning, for the day when the Messiah would come. They'd thought so much about the Messiah's coming they referred to him as 'the coming one'. They had definite expectations for the Messiah.

Along come John and Jesus. How is this dynamic duo received? The people were disappointed with John because he was too serious and they're disappointed with Jesus because he's too happy? Neither of them match up to the expectations.

Jesus says they're like children who're impossible to please. Some want more dancing and others want more mourning. John didn't dance enough and Jesus doesn't mourn enough. It's hard to dance when you're feeling sad and it's hard to feel sad when you're dancing.

Jesus confuses the people. So John the Baptiser asks, at the beginning of Matthew 11, a question in many minds, "Are you the One we've been expecting, or are we still waiting?" Jesus, are you the Messiah or not?

Jesus wasn't living up to their expectations. Why? How was he different to what they expected? What was he doing wrong? Was he too strict? Was he too gracious and forgiving? Was he too fun-loving?

Jesus identifies two issues, one with what he was doing and the other with whom he was doing it. He's criticised for feasting, eating and drinking too much. So isn't it fascinating - he leaves bread and wine as a way to remember him. He's also criticised for befriending and even eating with tax collectors and sinners. He's treating the lowest of the low as his friends and equals. Could God be like that?

If Jesus is the Messiah he appears to be having way too much fun and having it with the wrong people.

So Jesus has a short prayer thanking his Father that at least some people are getting the message. Not the wise and educated, their expectations blind them. But the little ones, the infants, those new to faith, are experiencing the gracious love of God in Jesus and they're eating, drinking and dancing with him.

Jesus tells the people about his relationship to God, the heavenly Father. He's the Son. As the Son he's the one who truly knows the Father and makes the Father known. He's telling them and showing them what God's like, showing them the heart of the Father.

"Come to me," he says, "and I will give you rest." If you're burdened by expectations, come! If you're worn out by being judgmental or by being judged, come! If you're sick of having all the answers or of having none, come! If you're burdened by being bossy or by being bossed, come!

Jesus invites us to come to him and he'll give us rest, we'll find rest for our souls. Whether it's the burden of expectations, the burden of worry, the burden of work or lack of work, the burden of money or lack of it, the burden of sickness, the burden of grief, or whatever our burden is - Jesus invites us to come with our burdens and receive rest.

Think about that for a moment - if you're like me sometimes we can feel burdened but not be sure what the burden is. Why am I feeling this way? If that's the case talk to Jesus. Tell him. Ask the Holy Spirit to diagnose your heart, reveal your need. Come and receive rest.

It's not an idle rest - Jesus tells us to take his yoke. Yokes are for work. But the yoke Jesus gives fits us well, it's tailor made, and it's a double yoke. We're yoked together with Jesus. He helps us carry our burdens and we learn to live in his love, experience his joy, and know his peace.

There could be an 'L-plate' on our side of the yoke because we're learning from the master. We're learning with the master. We're learning to think like Jesus, to love and forgive like Jesus. As we experience his grace and love the expectations of others aren't important.

We're yoked to the one who knows us inside out. He knows all our good thoughts and actions and all the others as well. Jesus knows us inside out and he loves us. His love is the greatest love we'll ever know.

Ironically, yoked to Jesus we find freedom. In this symbol of work we find rest.

Listen again to Jesus invitation. This is a personal invitation from Jesus to you. Hear it this time from the Message translation, Matthew 11:28-30. Jesus says,

*"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."*

The peace of God, which is beyond human comprehension, keep our hearts safe in union with Christ Jesus. Amen.