

The Unburdened Heart (Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30)

Today, we delve into the heart of the Gospel of Matthew. This portion of Scripture reminds us of God's wisdom and Christ's invitation to relief from our burdens. Every generation has its privileges. The privileges are used by some and ignored and abused by others. Since the coming of Christ, the greatest privilege in all the world has been of knowing him personally, for it is Christ who makes us accountable to God. And there is no greater privilege than the privilege of knowing God face to face. However, the vast majority have ignored and abused Christ; therefore, most do not know God, not personally.

When looking at his own generation, Jesus asked: "To what can I compare this generation?" And the most adequate illustration he could come up with was that of children. He was saying that his own generation was a **childish generation**. By **childish**, he meant **perverse**. His generation was a perverse generation.

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They turned away from that which was right and good to that which was corruptible. They acted contrary to the evidence. They were opposed to that which was right, reasonable, and acceptable; and they were obstinate in their opposition. They were just wrong-headed, mindless, and contrary. They did not want the truth, so they made excuses for not receiving the truth.

Today's passage starts with Jesus drawing a comparison of His generation to children sitting in the marketplace and calling to each other, saying, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge and you did not mourn."

The imagery here is strong. Imagine being in a bustling marketplace, filled with the chatter of commerce, the laughter of children playing, and the melodies of the flute. Yet, there's a disconnect—there's music, but no dancing, a mournful dirge, but no tears. This is the disconnect

that Jesus is highlighting. The Pharisees, the learned men of the law, could not understand the

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message of the Kingdom that Jesus was delivering, much like those who hear the flute but do not dance.

So, let's look at the **childishness** of this generation.

The illustration is clearly understood. Children are playing in the marketplace. A few begin to play wedding music on their pipes and cry out to others, "Let's march and play 'wedding'." The others shout back, "No. We don't want to dance around today."

So, the first group, still wanting to play, begin to play funeral music and shout back, "Well, let's play funeral." "No. We don't want to play funeral either. We don't feel like acting sad."

This generation is contrary, mindless, and playful.

They are fault-finders who cannot be pleased. They find fault with whatever is suggested. They just cannot accept and be pleased with anything that puts restrictions upon their loose play. They find

fault with a separatist approach to the gospel, and they also find fault with a sociable approach to the gospel.

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They accused John the Baptist of separation. John came neither eating nor drinking. He was a separatist. He was from the desert and lived a strict, austere life, being highly disciplined. He did not associate with people or make friends. He just isolated himself and cut himself off from everyone. He withdrew from society. His message was a gospel of repentance and separation from the things of the world. Therefore, he was accused of being a **devil**, that is of being mad and insane for choosing to live that way.

This generation accused Jesus of worldliness. Jesus was the very opposite of John. Jesus lived and preached a gospel of liberty. He ate and associated with the people, sharing in their social affairs. He moved among all sorts of people, mixing and making himself accessible to all, no matter how

terrible they were thought to be. Therefore, he was accused of being a sinner himself: a glutton, a habitual drinker of alcohol, and an immoral friend of sinners.

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The childish generation justifies its inconsistencies. John lived and preached a gospel of repentance and separation. Jesus lived and preached a gospel of liberty. The people were like children: they found fault with both and accepted neither. They just wanted to do their own thing. The final act of childishness was that they justified their inconsistency.

Let me make note of several lessons here. There are two approaches to righteousness; the separatist approach of John and the sociable approach of Jesus. The majority reject both approaches. They are as children at play, fault-finders who cannot be pleased. So, some are playful. They are having a good time and do not want to be interrupted and bothered. They want to go on doing their own thing.

Some are mindless and thoughtless. They do not think about the reason and logic behind God's glorious plan in the

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Messiah. They refuse the reality of truth: the evil, sin, and depravity of the world, and the existence of a personal God and the desperate need for Him to save the world. Some are contrary. Their minds are made up. They are not going to listen to any other view. They have their own thoughts about the world and morality, and they are comfortable living as they wish. Therefore, they stubbornly reject any other view, no matter the reasonableness of what was presented.

A second lesson is that most people reject any attempt to restrict their own play. They wish to continue doing their own thing—whether it be seeking pleasure, intellectual pursuit, secular

interest, or religious commitment. Most are willing to go only so far in restricting their own desires, will, and way. Few are willing to deny self completely.

A third lesson is that God clearly used both approaches to righteousness. Jesus did not condemn John's approach, and John did not condemn Jesus'

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approach. They supported each other. What a lesson for believers! There is no room for a judgmental spirit. Men have different temperaments and need to be approached by different methods.

But God in his wisdom, knows where to reveal his secrets. Jesus continues in verses 25 and 26, thanking the Father because he has hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to little children. This is not a rebuke of wisdom or understanding, rather it emphasizes that worldly wisdom alone is not enough to comprehend the mystery of the Kingdom of God. It

takes a childlike faith and humility to truly receive God's wisdom.

Jesus then gives the invitation that has comforted billions over the centuries. In verses 28 to 30, Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in

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heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

This invitation is not to a vacation away from all responsibilities, but to a new way of carrying life's burdens. A yoke is a wooden beam used between a pair of oxen, so they can pull together. By asking us to take his yoke, Jesus is saying he wants us to share our burdens, to pull alongside us. So, this is an invitation to dance to the tune of God's wisdom and mourn the sorrow of our sinful ways. More

importantly, it is a comforting promise that we are not alone in our struggles, we have a Savior who shares our yoke and lightens our burden.

So, what are the **lessons** we can learn from this Scripture reading from Matthew?

Jesus uses the analogy of comparing his generation to children in the marketplace to show that the people of his generation were fickle and inconsistent in their

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response to the truth. Taking Jesus' yoke upon us means becoming his disciples, ready to learn how to live and not just receive grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Jesus highlights that God has chosen to reveal the truth to those who are humble and open to receiving it. And finally, we can find rest in Jesus by coming to him with our burdens, trusting his teachings, and following his guidance.

Please bow your heads as I pray.

Father, may we see wisdom in those who are preparing a way for your presence and in those who are befriending sinners. Thank you for revealing yourself to infants and to those who inhabit life's edges. Help us listen to those who know God. Help us who are weary and who carry heavy burdens. Help us to come to you, the one who is gentle and humble in heart, so our souls may find rest. We ask this in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**