

An Easy Burden
Matt 11:25-30

Friends, every few years somebody comes up with quote about what our greatest resource is.

Herbert Hoover, the 31st President of the United States once said that “Children are our greatest natural resource...”

And Walt Disney, a contemporary of President Hoover echoed those sentiments with his statement “our greatest national resource is the minds of our children...”

A generation later David Suzuki, an environmentalist, said that water is our greatest natural resource...

and somewhere along the line someone came up with the notion that time is our greatest resource...

And I’d be inclined to agree with each of these quotes... they are all very important resources and depending on the context they may very well be our greatest resource.

And on a personal level I used to favor the one about time – of all my resources I used to think that time was the most valuable, the greatest asset that I had.

But I changed my mind a year or so ago after reading the book “Leading on Empty” by Wayne Cordiero, a pastor and author from Hawaii.

He also used to think that time was his most precious resource – until he burned out... and then he realized that his most precious resource was energy, and I’m inclined to agree with him.

But I wonder, what do you think? Is your greatest resource energy; your physical energy, emotional energy, mental energy, spiritual energy?

Or maybe the more important question is; if we all had energy level gauges that showed how much physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energy we had – what would your gauges be reading right now?

Would they say ‘annoyingly perky and energetic’ or ‘bright-eyed and bushy tailed’ or ‘steady as she goes’ or would they say ‘need a caffeine boost’ or ‘drink a Red Bull’?

Or perhaps your gauges would show that you are getting close to empty – that needle is all the way down in the ‘exhausted zone’ and if it gets any lower you are in danger of burning out.

And if that’s the case friends, if you are running low on your most precious resource – energy... and you are feeling weary and burdened from all the demands and responsibilities that life seems to pile on you; then this morning you will certainly hear Jesus’ words as good news!

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened...

Friends I know that many of us are weary and burdened. It is a lot of work to stay on top of all the things that we need to stay on top of.

We have family that needs our time and attention, kids need to get to school, to their sports, to work, and to do thing with their friends, so we’re driving them around – and we’re glad to do because it we love them... but it takes up energy.

And our spouses have their ups and downs that they go through in work and in life and with their health – and we promised that they could count on us, that we’d be there to love and support them through it all... and since we love them we want to be there for them... but that takes energy too.

And maybe we also have to look after our parents as they get older and we have concerns about their abilities to care for themselves and live on their own and if we don’t help them out who will? And that takes more of our energy...

And then we have our work responsibilities – not only do we need to earn a living and pay the bills and provide for our family but most of us care about the work we do.

We're not just putting in hours and punching a clock – if something goes wrong on what we are working on, we want to fix it, we take responsibility, we have pride in what we do... and often our work tends to demand the majority of our energy.

And then... as if all this wasn't enough to fill up our time and use up our all of our energy, we have the unexpected hassles that pop up on us... like my example last week of discovering there's been a mistake on your cell phone bill, and you have to chase down someone at the phone company in order to fix it...

Or you discover that the water line to your refrigerator has been slowly leaking for who knows how long – but suddenly you're finding water leaking out from under the fridge – and you have no idea how much hidden damage you have to fix...

Or you get into a car accident, your computer hard drive decides to go kaput...

Or you discover that your credit card has been frozen because someone in Australia hacked your account and withdrew \$500.00 – so you have to spend the afternoon cancelling your card, and getting a new one and contacting all the companies who have that card on file to get them the new information....

And just hearing about all this stuff is enough to start to make us feel burdened and weary as we are sitting here – because we know what it's like to have to try and find the extra energy to deal with all of this stuff.

Now, some people try deal with these problems and aggravations by minimizing them. They call them “first world problems.”

For example when the barista messes up your latte order and you got a half-caf mocha Frappuccino instead of pumpkin spiced latte and you flip out – they say chill out it's just first world problems!

In other words the challenges and difficulties and that we must endure are not as bad as what some other people have to face in other parts of this world – so suck it up princess.

And to be sure a mixed up latte order is nothing to flip out over – but when it happens after you’ve been on the phone the entire morning trying to navigate a phone menu and getting the run around from each customer service rep you’ve been speaking to... and because of this you’re behind on an important project at work.

And this phone pursuit takes priority over work at the moment because you’re trying to arrangement for your benefits provider to pay for some physiotherapy that your child needs because they have a sports injury and you need to know how to properly submit the claim.

And the physio needs to be paid in order to continue and it needs to continue a.s.a.p because your kid really wants to play in a tournament that’s coming up in three months and if they keep on with physiotherapy now he will be recovered in time to

play – so you have to get the payment issue with your benefits company solved.

But of course going to the tournament depends on whether or not you can figure out how to get some extra money to put new tires on the car because it’s a long road trip and you shouldn’t really go on a long road trip with condition your current tires are in...

and then... just when you want to take break from all this craziness with nice latte – you get a half-caf mocha Frappuccino instead of your pumpkin spiced latte! So you flip out...

Well friends – can I just tell you; first world problems or not; by the time things have got to the point where you are flipping out in a Starbucks or wherever you get your latte...

You need to know that through His Holy Spirit, Jesus is standing there with you - right there at Starbucks -and He puts his hand on your shoulder and says to you “come to me, you who are **weary and burdened**”

Friends if you've ever wondered how Jesus relates to you, if you've ever thought about how someone who lived two thousand years ago can relate to what you go through now and what your life is like today— this is it!

Jesus knows that we are weary and burdened.

He knows that it's practically impossible for anyone who lives on the Westside of Calgary and has a life... to make it through to the end of the week without feeling weary and burdened at some point – and so he says to us “Come to me...”

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened...

Now one of the ways we can do this friends, is simply by coming to church. We can come to Jesus just by showing up here on a Sunday morning for worship.

Now I know that for many people this feels counter-intuitive because after a week of demands and responsibilities Sunday morning is when we need a rest – we don't feel like getting up

and going somewhere – understandably we want to sleep in and have a relaxing leisurely day of rest.

Buts that's exactly what Jesus promises us if we get up on Sunday to meet Him at church – Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened **and I will give you rest!** (vs.28)

Now to be sure if you've only had a few hours of sleep on Saturday night you may need to sleep in – because sleeping through the sermon isn't the kind of rest that Jesus is promising to you, instead Jesus will give you rest for your soul.

But perhaps that is exactly what you need, even more than extra sleep.... because friends when we are worn down by the demands of life; when we are anxious about all the issues that remain unresolved; or we worry about the potential for more things to go wrong – we don't sleep well, do we?

So let's be honest – a few more hours of sleep on Sunday morning won't relieve our weariness and burdens will it?

In fact if we're being honest we might as well admit that much of what we do to rest is simply a temporary interruption – an intermission – where we can get away from our day to day routine and escape whatever situation is making us weary and burdened – but only for a time, pretty soon we have to return and face it once again.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that a Canmore getaway is a bad thing, or getting out to do some hiking or skiing in the mountains is wrong – far from it; those are good gifts from God and we should enjoy them.

I'm just pointing out that the scripture passage we heard this morning says "Come to Jesus – all you who are weary and burdened" not "go to Canmore, or go skiing, or get some more sleep..."

You see friends when we come to Jesus by coming to church we are not just distracting ourselves for an hour and a half so that we can go back to the daily grind the following Monday,

we're not escaping from our situations to find some temporary relief...

No – we are actually bringing whatever is making us weary and burdened directly to Jesus; that's why He tells us to come to Him. 1 Peter 5:7 explicitly tells us to do this *"Cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you."*

So in the simple action of coming to church we are bringing our burdens to Jesus; and when we are here we can be even more intentional about it.

By talking about our situations to our minister; to the person who prays for us on prayer team; with our Christian friends...

When we sing songs to Jesus in praise and worship of Him and the lyrics of the songs help us to express some things that are difficult to put into words...

We listen to prayers where requests and needs are offered up to God in Jesus' name – and we offer our own needs along with these – and we say Amen to what's been prayed for!

You see friends, much of what we do in church is done to help us be more intentional about bringing our burdens to Jesus Christ...

In order that we might find rest for our souls...

You know friends I have discovered that I'm not so much in need of rest which recharges my physical and mental energy as I am in need of that which can recharge me emotionally and spiritually.

Do you know what I mean?

I can be physically rested and healthy, and you can all see that I have had plenty to eat – I have lots of resources to draw from there... but if something is weighing on my heart it will

drain my emotional and spiritual energy and I'll end up feeling weary physically and mentally!

As Proverbs 17:22 says *"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."*

I don't need more sleep – I need something to bring cheer back to my heart, something that can revitalize my spirit - and this is what happens as we bring our burdens to Jesus at church.

As we receive the assurance that Jesus hears us, that He knows about our situation, that He cares about our situation and that He will answer our prayers and we will experience His Kingdom breaking into our situation in some way – it brings peace, and hope, and joy...

And the joy of the Lord is our strength! (Nehemiah 8:10)

But this is more than just an emotional high that will fade in a couple days so that we have to come back for another fix - the

joy of the Lord is our on-going strength because it comes from the Holy Spirit.

When we come to church - we come together as the Church something happens. The Apostle Paul reveals to us in Eph 2:22 that when we come to church we are *“being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”*

So there is spiritual power that we are being filled with when we come to church because God is dwelling among us – and that means we are being recharged by the very presence of God himself and those energy level gauges are going to go from “weary and exhausted” all the way up to “Spirit-Filled and anointed” Amen!

Now as I said this is not an emotional high or even a spiritual high – friends; we are filled with the Holy Spirit so that once we are rested up we have been equipped and prepared to deal with our situations in a completely different way so that we won’t go back to being weary and burdened.

Jesus instructs us *“take my yoke upon you and learn from me – for I am gentle and humble of heart”*

Friends think of it this way – when we come to Jesus weary and burdened, we come with one of those “milk-maid” yokes across our backs and we’re struggling and staggering with what we have to carry with it.

In giving over our burdens to Jesus Christ through prayer and singing and sharing at church it’s like we’re putting that load into the back of a big wagon.

Then we are given a rest and some Gatorade or Red Bull to recharge us, but instead of taking up the load on our own again we hook ourselves up to a cattle-yoke alongside Jesus.

We go from bearing the load on our own to coming alongside Jesus who pulls it with us and teaches us how to pull the load so that we don’t become weary and burdened again.

So being yoked with Jesus and learning from Him means that we read the bible, we study the bible, we put mental effort into understanding how the scriptures apply to our lives and then we follow them..

We are trained by Jesus to think as scripture thinks, to do as scripture instructs, to believe the truth revealed in scripture

And when we stumble along the way as we are learning, and when to pull to the right or push to the left – friends the good news is that we are yoked together with Jesus – and he is humble and gentle and will help keep us on track.

You see farmers would often train younger, inexperienced oxen by pairing them up with an older more experienced one who would help them learn how to shoulder the yoke and pull the wagon, pace themselves, and listen to the directions given by the driver to stay on the road where the wagon rolls easily...

And if you want to expand the analogy further; you could say that you're not just pairing up with Jesus but with a whole team of oxen – all the rest of your fellow Christians at Church - and you're all pulling the wagon with your burdens together with Jesus in the lead...

Just like Paul says in Gal 6:2 *“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”*

And that is why Jesus can say that His yoke is easy and His burden is light!

Coming to Jesus doesn't mean that we get rid of whatever situation it is that has us feeling weary and burdened – but it means that the way we carry it changes, the way we deal it, face it, understand it and respond to it is different because of what we have learned from Jesus in the scripture.

And pretty soon we discover that we are pulling through our situations, and helping others pull through their situations and we're not even breaking a sweat...

We had this happen at prayer group the other evening – as we went around and listed all the burdens that we had to pray for that night: several people who were dealing with cancer treatment or possible cancer prognosis; a couple of immigration situations; people looking for work; employers trying to find good workers; and aging parents...

And someone said – wow... does anyone else feel the burden of all these things seeming to happen at once? And we all nodded that we did - but we started praying... and an hour later after we had prayed through all these situations together and brought them to Jesus we were at peace, we didn't feel burdened or weary at all!

Friends, I know we all want to experience this; we all need to experience this... how things can change for us so that we can go from being weary and burdened to carrying each other's burdens instead.

It starts by hearing the good news – so friends; hear it, and believe it, and act on it!

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest! Amen!