

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, 5 July 2026

Gen 24.34-38,42-49,58-67

³⁴ So he said, “I am Abraham’s servant. ³⁵ The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. ³⁶ And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. ³⁷ My master made me swear, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; ³⁸ but you shall go to my father’s house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.’ ⁴² “I came today to the spring, and said, ‘O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! ⁴³ I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, “Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,” ⁴⁴ and who will say to me, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels also”—let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master’s son.’ ⁴⁵ “Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, ‘Please let me drink.’ ⁴⁶ She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, ‘Drink, and I will also water your camels.’ So I drank, and she also watered the camels. ⁴⁷ Then I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him.’ So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. ⁴⁸ Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son. ⁴⁹ Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left.” ⁵⁸ And they called Rebekah, and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” She said, “I will.” ⁵⁹ So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham’s servant and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, “May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes.” ⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. ⁶² Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. ⁶³ Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. ⁶⁴ And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, ⁶⁵ and said to the servant, “Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself. ⁶⁶ And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. ⁶⁷ Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

Ps 145.8-14

10 Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear: forget your own people and your father’s house.

11 The king desires your beauty: he is your lord, therefore bow down before him.
12 The richest among the people, O daughter of Tyre: shall entreat your favour with gifts.
13 The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is embroidered cloth-of-gold.
14 In robes of many colours she is led to you, O king: and, after her, the virgins that are with her.
15 They are led with gladness and rejoicing: they enter the palace of the king.
16 In place of your fathers you shall have sons: and make them princes over all the land.
17 And I will make known your name to every generation: therefore the peoples shall give you praise for ever.

Romans 7.14-25

14 For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. 15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Matthew 11.15-19, 25-30

Let anyone with ears* listen! 16 'But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,
17 "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn." 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon"; 19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.' 25 At that time Jesus said, 'I thank* you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.* 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Sermon

Deidre Browne the Australian Roman Catholic Sister from Melbourne relates the story of her song “Come as you are”. She writes:

“I became aware of a graced moment which later caused me to take up pen and paper and write words and music to this haunting phrase: Come as you are. Music and words flowed so quickly that I felt I was simply writing what was already fully composed. The interior call to trust was so strong that I had a sure sense that I would always be forgiven for the rest of my life. All the while I heard in the background the words of Jesus:

‘Come to me all you who are burdened and I will give you rest. Do not fear. Just come as you are. Continue to trust in a forgiving and loving God. Trust those who can help you. Just come and I will be there for you.’

In our Gospel readings over the past few weeks, Jesus has been talking about the cost of discipleship.

Today Jesus seems to change tack. He promises; rest and comfort, light burdens and easy yokes.

Lest we get too comfortable, Jesus ’words are not as simple as they first seem.

When Jesus says“ *Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest*”, he isn’t talking to people with everyday problems.

Those of us who have bills to pay, those who are homeless, those who are unemployed, those who are sick, or have difficult children, or are going through hardship, or whatever.

Jesus has plenty to say to these folk on other occasions.

Today Jesus is talking to those who are on the journey of faith. Those who are seeking God, and more importantly, a relationship with God.

These are the same people Paul is talking about in the reading from Romans.

Jesus is calling those who have tried the traditional ways of finding peace with God and have achieved only frustration. He is calling to the religiously exhausted.

The real clue to what Jesus is saying is the word “yoke”. “Yoke” was the common metaphor used by rabbis for the Law of Moses.

Jesus is challenging the traditional ever-expanding demands of the petty legalism demanded by the Pharisees.

When Jesus says, “*the wise and intelligent*”, he means the religious leaders who have missed the point.

Jesus rejects the yoke of the Pharisees. The Pharisees’ demand was that in order to gain God’s favour, in order to be a decent person, in order to be loved, you have to follow their interpretation of “the law”, and do it exactly right.

That yoke, the yoke of seeking God by keeping the rules, by doing what others say is the right thing to do, by trying to get it right all the time and so living constantly in fear of getting it wrong, that yoke leads a person to “labor and be heavy laden.”

It leads to living in what Paul called “*this body of death.*”

To teach that this is the way to God is not only terrible theology, it can also be devastating.

Those who, like Paul, struggled under such a yoke discovered that it didn’t fit; that it didn’t bring them to God; that it didn’t enrich their lives. Those sort of yokes never do. They only ensure frustration and exhaustion, or if you do happen to succeed you run the risk of becoming smug and self-righteous.

God’s presence with us and God’s love for us are never the results of our actions.

Jesus says throw off the yoke of the Pharisees, and “Come to me.”

In essence, Jesus is saying, “If you seek God; if you seek God’s love; if you seek a life that makes sense; if you want a way of understanding the world, if you want to be who you are created to be, if you want this, then come to me.”

It’s a call into relationship. A relationship with Jesus, a relationship with God, and a relationship with the community that continues Jesus’ life and ministry. That is us, the Community of Faith.

** (It is into this community that we will be baptising Jaxson and Austin in a few moments.)

A community made up up all sorts of people who have responded to Jesus’ invitation to “come”, who have taken the “yoke” and in so doing have found grace.

The yoke Jesus offers is best understood by Jesus’ declaration, that all the commandments are observed by “loving God and loving our neighbour”.

One more thing: In many translations, Jesus calls his yoke “*easy.*” Now, that’s an unfortunate English word; it makes it sound like everything’s easy, that very little effort or energy is required. And as anyone who has tried to live the life of Jesus knows, that’s just not true.

A better translation is found in The New English Bible. It reads, “*My yoke is good to bear.*”

The point is not that this yoke, the Lord’s call to relationship, asks nothing of us. The point is that it fits, it’s the right size, so it works. It leads to God, and it brings with it wholeness and a peace that can be found nowhere else.

** (That is the promise God makes in response to the promises made by parents, sponsors, and congregation bringing Jaxson and Austin to be baptised.)

To come to him is to discover that life with God, is a gift.

To come to him is to discover, as Paul discovered, that “*there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

To come to him is to discover that the chore of getting it right is replaced by the gift of God’s grace, and our grateful response to that gift.

All the strong stuff we’ve been hearing the past few weeks about the cost of discipleship is still very much there. But the yoke is “good to bear”.

It leads to life embraced by God’s mercy.

To carry it is to fulfil both God’s will and our own deepest humanity.

We are called by Jesus to share in the community of others who have “come to him”.

When we accept the invitation then we are on a journey that leads us into life.

To paraphrase Jesus, “Come to me if you seek God, if you seek life, just come as you are.”