

Matthew 11:25-30 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. ²⁷ "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, 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."

Dear brothers and sisters, simply believing:

My Smartphone is way smarter than I am. Siri knows things I'll never comprehend and it's just an inanimate computer chip. I often wonder if I use even 1% of what my phone is capable of doing. It's just plain complicated. In my case, it's overkill.

To me, simple things are best. I still have fond memories (from 40 years ago) of the simple days of work and worship during my vicar year in our mission in Puerto Rico. We worshiped in structures that were beautiful in their simplicity -- sometimes my duplex living room, under a carport in a mountain village, or even sometimes under a big shade tree. We would have a simple altar and the simple Word of God preached to simple Christian hearts. The focus was not on symbols, rites, or traditions (they didn't have those things!) but on people and their greatest need: Jesus and his forgiving love -- the simple yet beautiful Gospel.

Jesus reminds us in these words today that sometimes we make things too complicated. Oh, that doesn't mean we shouldn't stretch and move on from drinking spiritual milk to eating spiritual meat. We need to grow in knowledge and in faith. But these words tell us, **"Don't Complicate Your Faith"** (1) *Believe like a little child*, and (2) *Take on yourself Jesus' easy yoke*.

1

The Savior begins this section with a prayer to the Father, something Jesus did regularly -- which is very instructive to us. Jesus, true God, in humility prays. How much shouldn't we, sinners that we are, do the same? He says, ***"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."*** Isn't it amazing how little children can grasp the greatest teachings of the Bible and simply believe them? Little ones, trained by their parents, can tell you all about sin, Jesus, the cross, forgiveness, and wonderful place called heaven. Praise to the Holy Spirit who makes this happen! Our LES and SS teachers have the thrill of seeing and hearing that simple faith expressed repeatedly.

But we adults seem to make things so complicated. We get a noggin full of knowledge, which is fine, until we begin to place it, quite arrogantly, above God's Word. For example, the more we delve into **quantum physics**, the study of the universe's minutest particles, the more weird things become, not holding to the laws of nature as we know them at all. Read sometime about "quantum entanglement" and see if it doesn't take your breath away! And many scientists begin to conjecture about this, flustered because they can't come up with a logical explanation that fits their view of the universe or the "theory of everything." They say, "This just can't be!" And a Christian child says, "Wow, God sure is great. He sure knows a lot more than I do."

Not only is this true with children and their view of creation, it's also true with their view of salvation. Jesus even uses them as an example of what our faith should be like when he said, ***"Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it"*** (Mk 10:15). What is Jesus saying? He's not saying you can't go to heaven unless you are a child. Many people come to

faith as adults, including the Apostle Paul. What Jesus is saying is this: ***“Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God with the faith of a little child”*** won’t enter into it. He’s talking about the simple, trusting heart of a child.

Saving faith, of course, is a gift the Holy Spirit creates and imparts through the gospel in Word and sacraments. Worldly wisdom, *if we allow it to be*, can be an obstacle to such faith. Jesus wants us to keep it simple. Ultimately, that’s what Martin Luther was trying to do -- return the church to its simple roots, the teachings of Christ. His message? Don’t complicate faith by adding human works or opinions or traditions to what Jesus did and taught. His words are clear: Simply believe the simple truth.

2

Not only does Jesus seek our simple trust for salvation and life in heaven, he also wants us to trust him as we live on this troubled planet. He lovingly invites us: ***“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 humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”***

One of the things Jesus teaches us in the Bible is to be realistic about life on earth. Being a Christian does not exempt us from sickness, suffering, and difficulty. As we get older, we wake up in the morning and do an inspection: what hurts and what’s not working right today? And then we watch the news to find out if our retirement plan is still viable. And then we watch the weather to see if the farmers are catching a break this year. And on and on it goes day after day.

While Jesus teaches us to be realistic about our troubles, he also teaches us where to go for help when troubles arise. He is our spiritual 911. He’s the One who says, ***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”*** There was a teacher who read these words to her LES class: ***“For my yoke is easy...”*** She asked, *“Who can tell me what a yoke is?”* A boy said, *“A yoke is something farmers put on the necks of animals.”* Then the teacher asked, *“What is the yoke God puts on us?”* A girl replied, *“God’s yoke is Jesus putting his loving arms around our necks.”*

When we daily place our lives into Jesus’ hands, then we can understand what that little girl said. For her, faith was not complicated. God told her that he loved her and would take care of her. She simply believed what he said: ***“In all things God works for the good of those who love him”*** (Rom 8:28). She knew his arms were embracing her.

And that’s what faith is: simply believing what Jesus said. It means we subordinate our human reason, so often skewed by the world, and elevate God’s Word and promises. When we do that, we will find exactly what Jesus promised we would find: ***“I will give you rest....rest for you souls.”***

Amen.