

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Pentecost 6
July 9, 2023
Sermon by Pastor Jon D. Buchholz
“Let me carry that!”

—Matthew 11:25-30

Watch a three-year-old child sleep, and you'll grasp very quickly the meaning of the phrase, "Sleep like a baby." That little one sleeps away, unburdened by the worries and concerns of life. The child knows he's loved. The child knows she's safe and secure. That child is completely oblivious to what's going on in the world, what's being reported on the nightly news. The child doesn't have to worry about what's for dinner or where the money is coming from to pay the bills. The child is lost in blissful slumber, off in la-la land, comfortable and secure. All is calm, all is peace. That's how I slept when I was three years old. That's how my children slept when they were three years old: No cares, no concerns.

When I was a little child, I knew that my daddy was strong enough to tackle just about anything. There wasn't a problem he couldn't solve. There wasn't a tight lid on a jar that he couldn't open. There wasn't a rock he couldn't lift. There wasn't a burden he couldn't carry. Then I got older, and I found that my daddy was strong, but he couldn't do absolutely everything. My own burdens got bigger and heavier, and they were burdens that were not so easily picked up and carried by others. The challenges in life became about more than loosening lids and moving big rocks. The challenges I faced included the burden of increased responsibilities; the burdens of deadlines and pressures; the burdens of anxiety, worry and fear; the burdens of guilt and shame; the burden of disappointing others and not living up to expectations; the burden of wondering whether I was liked and cool and popular and respected. You know how it goes because you've experienced the same things. Those were burdens that even my strong daddy couldn't help me shoulder. They're burdens that are common to our human experience.

Today we're continuing our series entitled, "Define Christian." Last week Pastor Pflughoeft reminded us from God's Word that a Christian loves God above all things. Today we see that Christians know where to drop off our burdens. We Christians know where to go to find rest.

A German proverb says, "*Leid geteilt ist halb das Leid, Freud geteilt ist doppel's Freud*" (Sorrow shared is half the sorrow, joy that is shared is twice the joy). Isn't it true that when something is really bothering us, something is really weighing us down, sharing that burden with someone else is just what we need to start feeling better? Sorrow that is shared is half the sorrow because someone else can help carry the burden and ease the pain. And isn't it true that when we're bursting with joy, and we just have to share it with someone, sharing that joy doubles the joy, as someone else joins in the celebration! One of the blessings we enjoy as Christians is that we have fellow Christians to help us share our sorrows and with whom we can share our joys.

The problem is, though, that when it comes to sharing sorrows and burdens, we have a lot of burdens to share. As much as we can bear one another's burdens, the fact is that pretty soon we start to say, "I can only take so much. I'm happy to share their sorrows, but the weight of their burdens is starting to drag me down." But listen to what Jesus says to us today: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Jesus actually invites us to come and dump our burdens on him. "Bring it all!" he says. Doubts, fears, anxieties, worries, responsibilities, stress, deadlines, bills, pressures—bring it all! You're tired and anxious and weary and burdened, and Jesus says, "You're hunched over under a big, big load. It's too much for you to bear by yourself. Let me carry that."

So what burdens are weighing you down in life?

Maybe you're burdened by health issues. Perhaps you labor under chronic illness and the day-in, day-out pain of affliction, and when your body is wracked with pain every day you want to cry out, "How long, Lord, do I have to suffer like this?" Maybe it's a recent diagnosis that leaves your future uncertain. Cancer. Heart disease. You or a loved one could live or you could die; you don't know. And Jesus says, "Bring your burden to me. Let me carry that." He reminds you that for us to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21). He can heal and take away the pain, or he can use an illness to close out our earthly days and take us to heaven; either is a win. When we close our eyes here in death, we open them with Jesus in heaven. When we say good-bye to a loved one here, we wait for a blessed reunion soon in heaven. The burden of health? The threat of death? Jesus says, "Let me carry that."

Maybe these days you find yourself burdened with fear. In these days of pandemic illness, the threat of war, the threat of economic collapse, the increase in crime, the decrease in morality, perhaps you find your heart gripped with a fear of the unknown, a fear of what tomorrow might bring. And Jesus says, "Bring your burden to me. Let me carry that." He

reminds us that our heavenly Father knows the number of hairs on your head. He cares for the sparrows, and aren't you worth much more than sparrows? Your heavenly Father has engraved your name on the palm of his hand; you are precious to him. Jesus is very much in control, ruling all things for the glory of his name and the good of his church—that means you. He says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid" (John 14:27). You're weighed down by a burden of fear? Jesus says, "Let me carry that."

Maybe you're laboring under a burden of stress. Pressure, deadlines, responsibilities. Maybe you're feeling pinched financially. Your job is in question. Your credit card debt is stacking up. Your creditors are hounding you, and you have no idea where the money is going to come from. And Jesus says, "Bring that burden to me, too. Let me carry that." The Lord provides according to our needs. Stop worrying and trust God's providence. Be diligent, be faithful, work hard, use the talents God has given you. Be a faithful, hardworking employee. Spend your paycheck wisely. Be careful and frugal with your spending. And pray to your Father, "Give us today our daily bread." That's it. That's all we need. God took care of us yesterday, and he's taking care of us today, and he'll take care of us tomorrow. Put it into the Lord's hands. Don't worry. Don't stress. Don't be overwhelmed. Jesus says, "Let me carry that."

Maybe you're laboring under a burden from past sins. The weight of what you did in the past or failed to do continues to press on you and drag you down. Your conscience troubles you and robs you of peace. You're afraid that God still remembers your sin. You're plagued by guilt and afraid of judgment. And Jesus says, "Bring that burden to me. Let me carry that." And he points us to his cross where he spilled his precious blood and laid down his life for the sin of the world. He holds up his empty tomb, where he conquered death on Easter and where his victory over sin was sealed forever. And when we pray, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. According to your great compassion, blot out my transgression. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:1,2). Jesus says, "The burden of sin, of guilt, of judgment—let me carry that. I *have* carried that."

Jesus invites us to bring our burdens and dump them all on him, and he exchanges them for his yoke and his burden. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." You know what a yoke is, right? It's a huge, heavy block of wood that rests on the shoulders of two oxen as they pull a wagon or some other load. But here's the thing—in order to yoke two animals together you can't just grab any old chunk of barn timber and lay it across those animals' shoulders. That yoke has to be specially carved, formed, sanded, fitted, just for those specific animals, so that it rides easily on the shoulders of those beasts of burden. Jesus lays on you and me a yoke of discipleship, and it's a yoke that is especially fitted for you. In this life he won't allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear. He promises to be with you and to bless you as you walk through this life and even as you approach death. His yoke might seem heavy at times, but it's the yoke especially prepared for you. He lays on you his forgiveness, and along with that come the special joys and challenges of being his disciple. His yoke is easy and his burden is light.

One thing to remember about bringing our burdens to Jesus and letting Jesus carry our load: He wants us to bring them to him and leave them. So often we want to still hold onto them. We take our sins, our anxieties, our worries, our doubts, our fears, our stresses—we take them to Jesus and say, "Here, Lord, take these from me!" But then we very quickly turn around and want to pick them up and carry them some more. Don't do that! When you come to Holy Communion today, and the Lord Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest," bring your burdens, all your heavy baggage, and leave it behind. Eat and drink the body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and the refreshment of your soul, and depart in peace—your sins forgiven, your burdens lifted, reassured that you are loved and cherished by your Savior. In the Supper Jesus instituted for you, find rest for your soul.

That's what it means to be a Christian: We know where to lay our burdens. Like little children, with simple, trusting, childlike faith, resting in our heavenly Father. We know where to find refreshment and rest for our souls. We find them in Jesus. Amen.