

Thought for the Day 26th May - John Thew

The Yoke that Fits

Micah 6:8 *"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

This is the foundational verse for *Micah Global*, a network of mission organisations who are doing Kingdom of God ministries around the world – that is, sharing the life-changing gospel of grace and addressing the practical needs of individuals and communities.

Christine MacMillan, Chair of the Global Board writes (23rd May 2020):

The gospel of Matthew draws on local images and metaphors, in teaching principles to live by. Picture Jesus as a man who extends invitations, as in the instance of Matthew 11:28-9 with ...'come'. His one word 'come' reaches deep into our isolation.

²⁸ Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

These days we are asked to distance ourselves from one another. Invitations to **come** to a conference, family wedding or funeral, and social gatherings are limited. We are missing those simple connections that we now realise were life giving. We come to a Zoom call and virtually communicate with one another, then we press the button, "leave meeting", and we are silenced in our reality of distance.

Hearing of the migrant community around the world, we pick up on their desire to return home, for there is little work for them now in the cities. In a recent forum, one of the presenters showed us a picture of migrants and commented on their desire to go home to die, if Covid-19 should hit the community where they had waited for daily work. They were talking about walking 2,000 miles to reach their destination of home. I saw in the forum presenter's photo a father with his young son on his shoulders, and that image remains with me every day. Home is always an invitation that pulls our hearts in the direction of safety, rest and being wanted. I ask the question, why does a migrant father carrying his boy on his shoulders, need to journey over 2000 miles to find home?

Jesus not only extends an invitation, but also offers us equipment to keep us safe and well, fitted for our life's journey. He picks up on the image of a yoke fitted on the neck of a team of oxen. This implement is made of wood, hand carved to fit each one, so that pulling that cart lightens the burden. In our words, a team that learns to collaborate easily together.

The Message translation of Matthew 29: 11 asks: *"Are you tired and worn out? Walk with me and work with me and watch how I do it."* Yes, we are tired and worn out, even from considering the 2,000 mile trek of a young father and his boy. Tired and worn out in carrying the burden of Covid-19, when many are finding it difficult to find their welcome home.

The phrase Jesus uses once we are equipped with his yoke is to *'learn from me'*. What new burdens are appearing for us, our churches and our organisations, that we are needing to carry differently? Are our yokes of strategy fit for the burdens of a pandemic, for the social isolation and the lifting of restrictions, and for acts of justice and mercy as we walk humbly with our God?

Lord Jesus, give us grace to learn from you, confidence to daily take up the yoke you have tailored for us, and joy in the good works you have prepared for each of us to do, for your glory.