

The Easy Yoke and the Light Burden

Matthew 11:16-30

February 8, 2004

Peter Hiatt

[Peter enters with the horizontal beam of a cross on his back.]

I thought I ought to take scripture seriously.

- Matthew 10:38: “He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”
- Matthew 16:24: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

This is what that looks like. They would flog you, then put one of these on your back, march you through town, nail you to a pole, and then watch you die . . . alone.

Beginning in Matthew 11:16, Jesus said:

“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates, ‘We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”

So we're supposed to weep and dance. Well, the weeping makes sense. Next verse . . .

Then he began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Beth-saida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Caperna-um, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

Imagine what it must have been like to be Jesus.

Imagine the burden of having to speak God's Word and be God's Word. What labor!

Imagine the pain of being rejected by those you love. (You can feel the cross already.)

Imagine how hard His labor would be and how burdened He was.

Two things I've learned from carrying this cross are: 1) It's not easy, and 2) It's a heavy burden. Next verse:

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and

understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” I can think of only one burden we’re commanded to bear, only one yoke we’re commanded to wear. The easy yoke and the light burden must be a cross. Isn’t that His yoke and His burden? [Peter takes off the beam.]

Yokes were for oxen. They were custom-fit for each ox and attached to a plow. A yoke was for farming. In chapter nine, looking at burdened people Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful.” And now He says that He has a “yoke.” The only thing resembling a yoke that we see on Jesus is a cross. And He says His yoke is “easy”—it fits.

- Yokes are for work, yet His gives rest.
- Yokes are a bondage, yet He talks like His sets you free.

Jesus says, “Take up a cross and follow” . . . “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” How can His cross be easy and light?

We ended last week's sermon on the Great Dance by saying, maybe His yoke and His burden is like a dance. C. S. Lewis calls the cross the "central movement of the dance," like the rhythm of the dance. So Calvary is our initiation into the Great Dance.

You know, a dance is bondage and toil, but it's not. I mean, it's bondage in that you're bound and ordered by the music, yet it feels like freedom. If your *self* makes your *self* do the dance steps, it feels like bondage. But if you lose your *self* in the rhythm of the dance, it feels like freedom.

And a dance is toil, but it feels like rest. Aerobics is toil because your *self* makes your *self* dance to lose weight. But if you just lose yourself and dance because you love the music, then it doesn't feel like toil. You burn just as many calories, and it feels like rest. Perhaps the cross is like a dance, and we just can't hear the music, such that in this world, the cross only looks heavy and hard.

We also said the dance is love. So the cross is the revelation of love in a world that doesn't dance, such that in this world, love only looks heavy and hard. Yet once you do love, it seems to make burdens light and yokes easy.

I work really hard for my money, and then I just give it over to this *woman* . . . these five people who spend it. When I think about it, I realize they are an incredible burden. Yet they are an incredibly *light* burden: my wife Susan and my four children. Love makes burdens light.

I'm yoked to my wife, and we've plowed the field and produced fruit: Jonathan, Elizabeth, Becky, and Coleman. And it was pretty easy. Now, Susan had *great labor*, but her love made the labor easy. I had great labor (paying the bills for her labor), but love made the labor easy. But in this world, most labor lacks love—real love. So the burden appears heavy and the yoke exceedingly hard.

It can be extremely hard to dance in this world. But, you know, it's easy to dance on the moon. (You can do back flips. My elderly father could dance on the moon, and he already has the oxygen tank!) I have an old picture from a newspaper article. It's of an astronaut grabbing a satellite with his hands. The satellite must weigh several tons—an *incredible burden* in this world. But not in space.

Someone wrote, "The weight of your burdens depends upon the attraction of the earth." Jesus said, "My burden is light."

Well, dancing, love, and other worlds may be clues as to how the burden is light. But I need to confess: I don't feel very qualified to speak on this, because I often feel so burdened. That is, I (myself, me) feel heavy and uneasy and restless. That confuses me, because I thought Jesus gave me the burdens. But He says His burden is "light." Jesus preached, and I believe He called me to preach, but I need to tell you: It usually feels like an *immense burden*.

For one, I don't know what to say. The more I know, the less it seems I understand. In these verses today, Jesus speaks judgment on Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum because they did not weep and dance. But then He thanks His Father because He has, like, hidden the music from them. They deserve judgment for not dancing, but it seems they had no choice.

I can't get my brain around that, but it's true, and I'm supposed to preach it, but I feel like an idiot. Then I think, "Or maybe I *am* an idiot. But then maybe that's God's will . . . or is it all my fault, or both?" So I don't know what to say, and then when I feel I've said something great, it's like people can't hear the music. They reject me and don't see Jesus. It feels futile and fruitless.

But then many times I'll preach, people will hear, and they'll write a great note. And I'll think, "Oh no . . . they're going to be so disappointed next week." What a burden! You all know that burden in different forms: preaching, mothering, laboring . . . It's this fear that I can't be what I'm called to be.

I can't make myself,
 I can't create myself,
 I can't save myself,
 I can't be good,
 I can't obey God's law.

His law is summed up in one word: *love*.

I've failed at loving God and loving my neighbor,
 I've drunk too much,
 I've glared at women and pictures of women with lust,
 I've treated my bride as an object of consumption,
 I've used you—the Bride of Christ—as a means
 for my own advancement.

The failures of my past, then, are this great burden. Then I look to the future, and they become an unbearable yoke. How can I preach, pastor, father, and provide? And it's not like I'm only worried about myself; I'm worried about *you*, because I'm worried I can't or won't help you. And if I don't help you, I'm worried no one else will. If I don't save you, who else will? We're talking about God, judgment, and eternal destinies, and I'm your *pastor*. That yoke does not feel easy to me. I think I'm a failure and I'm going to be a failure . . . and on top of that, my dad is dying, and I'm going to die. Then Jesus says, "Take my yoke."

It's almost as if I'm laboring under a curse: called to be fruitful yet cursed with futility. You know, long ago in a garden, when Adam and Eve were not yet fully made (on the sixth day of creation), they tried to make themselves in God's image. They stole fruit from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (I think that's the law.) And God spoke the curse.

Women were to bear children before the curse; it was a great gift. But after the curse, the fruit of her womb would be a great labor. Men were to work before the curse; it was a great gift. But after the curse, tilling the garden would be toil in unfruitful fields. God subjected creation to futility, and He drove them from that world into this world. He had told them, "The day you eat the fruit of the tree, you will die."

Do you understand my burden? My burden is *me*. It's taking me awhile to see it, but my burden is *me*. Do you ever want to get rid of your burden? lay it down? I mean, do you ever think about killing yourself? The problem is, you can't kill your self with your self. You can kill your body, but you can't give rest to your soul. You simply add a murder to your burdens.

Bill Maher said, "Suicide is saying to God, 'You can't fire me. I quit.'" He's right. It's just you seizing control of you, which is more *you*. You are your own restless, weary, painful yoke, and you are your own unbearable burden. Now listen to Jesus:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In that day, yokes were built for two. His yoke is a cross. Crosses kill people. He's offering to help you die to your *self*.

It's your self that keeps you from loving—
 Loving is losing your self in another.
 It's your self that keeps you from dancing—
 Dancing is losing your self in the music.
 It's your self that is the heavy burden and uneasy yoke.
 Your self can't help you with that burden;
 You need Jesus.

Brennan Manning wrote:

Probably the moment in my own life when I was closest to the Truth who is Jesus Christ was the experience of being a hopeless derelict in the gutter in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. . . . Walker Percy says: "Only once in my life was the grip of everydayness broken: when I lay bleeding in the ditch." Paradoxically, such an experience of powerlessness does not make one sad. It is a great relief because it makes us rely not on our own strength but on the limitless power of God. The realization that God is the main agent makes the yoke easy, the burden light, and the heart still.

Well, hopefully you don't have to drink yourself into a ditch to come to Jesus. However, you do need to admit you're hopeless without Him and enslaved to your lousy self. The Priest Anthony DeMello said:

I'm going to write a book someday and the title will be I'm an Ass, You're an Ass. [He must be referring to donkeys.] That's the most liberating, wonderful thing in the world, when you openly admit you're an ass. It's wonderful. When people tell you, "You're wrong." I say, "What can you expect of an ass?"

The pressure's off. You know, the cross isn't just for the end of your life or the beginning of your Christian life. It's for every day. If I really carried His cross every day . . . well, I suspect I'd still preach, pastor, father my kids, and provide for my wife. But I'd do it without the burden of *me* . . . always conscious of my self and conscious of my steps. My life might still hurt, and I'd burn as many calories, but it would be an easy yoke and a light burden, for my life would be like a dance. I'd constantly be losing myself in the dance and finding myself *dancing*. Jesus would be my dance partner. He leads, and I follow . . . to the rhythm of His love.

So then, I can really only dance *now*, in the present moment, with Him. I can't be thinking about the steps I've missed in the past; I can't be thinking about possible dance steps required in the future. My only burden is an infinitely small moment we call *now*.

I think that's how Jesus lived and danced in space and time—this world. You know, Jesus bore a cross every day. I mean, He surrendered Himself to His Father each moment. He bore a cross every day. But only on one day did He cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Even though He knew that day was coming, He didn't let it stop the dance the rest of the time. He lived each moment by His Father's lead, and their dance is love.

When the people rejected Him, He knew His Father was leading the dance still. He prayed, “Thank you.” To constantly give thanks is to remember that your Lord is leading the dance—sovereign over all things. The dance is love.

In verse twenty-seven, He prays, “ All things have been delivered to me by my Father [or “are delivered to me” in KJV]; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Then He says, “Come”—dance. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden.”

So why don’t more come? Why don’t we come all the time? Maybe because we’re not “weary and heavy laden” enough. Maybe because we’re not “poor in spirit, meek and mourning.” Maybe because we’re not “hungering and thirsting for righteousness,” because we think we have it. The law tells us we don’t have righteousness, but that we *need* it.

- Adam and Eve ate the “fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (the law), and it told them they were incomplete.
- On Mount Sinai, Moses gave more law.
- On the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave even *more* law.
- His cross reveals the meaning of the law—Himself. Paul writes, “The law came in, to increase the trespass”; that is, to help us know we deserve death and are dead.

The Pharisees believed they were experts in the law. Jesus says, “They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and don’t bear them themselves.” That is, they haven’t digested the fruit of the tree—the law—for themselves. If they had, they’d be

“weary, heavy laden, and hungering for righteousness.” A Pharisee still thinks he can make himself, save himself. So a Pharisee hates Christ’s cross, for it’s *too heavy* and *too light* all at once.

- The cross is too heavy, because it’s the fulfillment and revelation of the law. The cross reveals what’s truly good. Jesus is the Good, and He reveals they are evil and need to die. So they don’t look.
- The cross is too heavy, yet it feels too light. The cross reveals we’re dead (that’s heavy), and it reveals we’re forgiven (that’s light). Pharisees want to pay, but we can’t pay.

Suicide is trying to pay, but you can’t pay. If you’ve ever really received forgiveness, you know that the burden is that you want to pay and you can’t pay. The burden is its very lightness. *It’s free!*

Jesus prays, “You’ve hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to babes.” Maybe Jesus wants us all to become like babes, to enter as children. The Pharisees had not yet become children. Children have a very easy time *not paying* and a very easy time *dancing*.

Well, the burden is light: the burden is, in fact, grace.

It’s interesting: After watching a great dancer, you never say, “How beautiful! That was very responsible dancing.” You say, “Wow! That was so grace-full!” The burden we lay down is sin, and sin is self. [Singing:] “I’m gonna lay down my burden, down by the riverside.” “Do you

not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death” (Romans 6:3)?

The burden we lay down is self;
The burden we pick up is grace.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you” . . . A yoke is for tilling and farming. Yet His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The work is like rest, and the order is like freedom. Jesus sounds like Adam from before the Fall. Better yet, Jesus sounds like Adam if he had trusted God until the seventh day when God rested and he was to be perfected. Jesus sounds like Adam from the other side of the curse.

Well, Paul writes that Jesus is the Adam—the Ultimate Adam. He also tells us that we are Christ’s Bride. That means Jesus is the true Adam come for His Bride, but Eve is dead under the curse. We’re all Eve. He says, “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden” . . . “Eve, take my yoke upon you.”

Outside of scripture, most of what I’ve learned of the easy yoke and light burden I’ve learned through my friend who was raised in a coven and was afflicted with the most horrible burdens. One night around 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, having prayed through some awful memories, my friend not only remembered things done to her in the past, but also things that *she* had done in the past. She cried and sobbed to Susan and me, “I hate myself. I want to die.” We’d already dealt with an evil spirit named suicide, and now I knew it was *her* that wanted to die.

I finally said, “Tell Jesus.” She did, and then Jesus gave her her wish. She had a vision, and she saw that old self she hated (the heathen) nailed to a cross. Then she saw the self

that hated the old self (the Pharisee) also nailed to the cross. Then she watched Jesus nail Himself to the same cross. She watched herself die with Him.

The yoke is easy; it fits us; it's made for us, made for two, and we need to die. The burden is light, for we even *want* to die.

Yet Jesus said, "*My* yoke is easy, and *my* burden is light." Jesus didn't need to die. He wasn't under the curse. But scripture tells us that on the cross He became a curse for us, like He bit the fruit for the love of Eve, for He would not leave her. On the cross, He bears our curse (every pain and burden) and then dances in Hell. He's faithful to His Father unto death on a cross outside Jerusalem.

How can that be easy, and how can that be light? Well, He must be making, growing, harvesting something . . . or someone He loves very much.

Jesus is the Ultimate Adam come for His Bride, but Eve is dead under the curse. On the cross, He bears her curse and gives her His life. Eve—His Bride—His Church, is made with His own body and blood. Eve is created and recreated at Adam's bleeding side. That sounds familiar . . . almost as if God knew what He was doing all the while!

The Bride is the fruit of Christ's labor at the cross;
His harvest of faith and mercy, bread and wine;
His Bride: His very body, washed in His blood, white as snow.

So my friend had this vision and watched herself die on this cross with Jesus. But no sooner had she died than all at once she saw herself standing alive and dressed before the cross in a beautiful, white wedding gown, white as snow.

His yoke is easy, and His burden is light for the love of you—His Bride. "To have ever suffered the Passion for you,"

said Jesus to Julian of Norwich “is for me a great joy, a bliss, an endless delight; and if I could suffer more I would do so.”

Now I can only guess in wonder (I don’t know), but perhaps:

- What looks like a yoke of bondage in this world looks like the greatest freedom in another world.
- What looks like the greatest burden of shame in this world looks like the greatest glory somewhere else.
- What looks like a beaten, naked man hanging on a cross here looks like a Great Lion sitting on His throne somewhere else.

Maybe this world is upside down, and that cross is right side up. Maybe in the other world everyone dances, and it looks like Heaven (because it is). In this world, only One danced, and it looked like a cross.

In Isaiah, the Lord says, “I have trodden the winepress alone.” In that day, treading the winepress was to be a communal celebration. But He says, “I have trodden the winepress alone.” In Isaiah, He tramples Israel’s enemies in wrath. By the New Testament, we find that Israel’s enemy is herself.

In the Revelation, the Word that is Christ “tramples the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God.” Blood flows from the winepress and fills Israel to the depth of a horse’s bridle. It’s blood that is wine, and wine that is blood. This winepress is outside the walls of Jerusalem. I believe that winepress is the cross, our Lord’s yoke. And He says, “The harvest is plentiful.” He takes our burdens—the fruit that befits

repentance—our confessed sins, and He crushes them. They turn into wine: His Gospel of grace.

Grace to those who are being saved;
Wrath to those who hate the Gospel.

Wine and blood, the judgment of this world. “Now is the judgment of this world,” he cries in John 12, “and I, when I am lifted up from the earth [on His cross], will draw [romance] all men to myself.” At the cross, He died alone, but He won’t remain alone. There He draws us to Himself. The winepress looks like a tremendous burden in this world. But maybe in another world, it’s more like a dance.

All week I couldn’t get this picture out of my mind: [Movie clip from A Walk in the Clouds: “Crush the grapes, crush the grapes, crush the grapes . . .” A group of women tramples the grapes in a winepress, but they trample them to the sound of music. They dance. As they dance, they pull a young man (the groom) into the winepress. He joins the dance. As they chant “crush the grapes,” he leans over and gives his future bride her first kiss.]

The cross is a winepress. Jesus meets His Bride in the winepress and no longer dances alone. We are joined with Him in a death like His and will surely be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Romans 6:5). And all our weeping turns to dancing *forever*.

Close your eyes. Are you weary and heavy laden? Perhaps you can picture a cross. Next to the cross stands Jesus. Say, “Jesus, I surrender my burden. I surrender me.”

Now, if you did that, you’re dead. There’s no use killing yourself. You’re dead. In other words, you’re *forgiven*, and you are a *new creation*. You must “consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11).

So on the night He was betrayed, when everyone left Him, He took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper He took the cup and said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me."

We meet our Lord at the winepress (the cross) like Ruth met Boaz (her kinsman redeemer) on the threshing floor. A threshing floor is where you sift grain for bread. A winepress is where you make juice for wine. Sometimes they were the same place.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

“He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

Matthew 10:38

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Matthew 16:24-25

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

To the woman he said, “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3:16-19

Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 5:18-6:11

Probably the moment in my own life when I was closest to the Truth who is Jesus Christ was the experience of being a hopeless derelict in the gutter in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In his novel The Moviegoer, Walker Percy says: "Only once in my life was the grip of everydayness broken: when I lay

bleeding in the ditch.” Paradoxically, such an experience of powerlessness does not make one sad. It is a great relief because it makes us rely not on our own strength but on the limitless power of God. The realization that God is the main agent makes the yoke easy, the burden light, and the heart still.

Brennan Manning, The Signature of Jesus

For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. . . . For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 2:19-20, 5:1

And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

Acts 15:7-11

Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods;

once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant

2 Corinthians 11:23-29

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

The great war novelist, James Jones, author of From Here to Eternity, being interviewed shortly before his death, answered a reporter's question, "How in the middle of the horrors of war, do soldiers keep going? What enables them to fight on?" Jones replied, "What you do is you decide that you are dead. Right. Every soldier I knew, in the horrors of war, just decides, 'I'm dead.' That enables you to live. You go ahead and die, so you can be surprised when, at the end of the battle, you're still alive."

Will Willimon

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few . . .”

Matthew 9:36-37

Who is this that comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he that is glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? “It is I, announcing vindication, mighty to save.” Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like his that treads in the wine press? “I have trodden the wine press alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me victory, and my wrath upheld me. I trod down the peoples in my anger, I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

Isaiah 63:1-6

So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse’s bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia. . . . He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and

wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Revelation 14:19-20, 19:13-16

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:11-12

Suffering in and of itself is useless, but suffering which is a share in the passion of Christ is a marvelous gift for human life. The most wonderful of gifts is that we can share in Christ's passion.

Mother Teresa, One Heart Full of Love

Out of all the things we can do in our penance for our sin, the one which gives God most honour is to live gladly and joyfully for love of him. For he looks at us so tenderly that he sees our whole life here as a penance. All our nature longs for him, and this is a lasting penance for us. It is he himself who produces it, and mercifully helps us to bear it.

Julian of Norwich, Journeys into Joy

Then our good Lord Jesus Christ asked me: "Are you well satisfied that I suffered for you?" I said: "Yes, good Lord, and I thank you very much. Yes, good Lord, may you be blessed." Then Jesus our good Lord said: "If you are satisfied, I am satisfied. To have ever suffered the Passion for you is for me a great joy, a bliss, an endless delight; and if I could suffer more I would do so."

Julian of Norwich, Journeys into Joy

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Lookout Mountain Community Church
534 Commons Drive, Golden CO 80401
Phone: 303-526-9287 Fax: 303-526-9361
E-mail: info@lomcc.org