

All my life I have had an interest in tools and machinery; and I suppose that may be related to growing up in the country on a farm and being exposed to many kinds of tools and equipment that would be in use on the farm. And no, I am not old enough to remember oxen plowing the fields, but I do remember my dad looking for a two point plow so he could turn up the gardens himself with the little Ford tractor and that was because the plow they used in the farm fields was too big to maneuver in the garden. But the last field plow we had would look like a toy compared to the plows that are used today. They are so much larger they look like you might be able to plow an acre with just two or three swipes across a field! Which brings us back to the oxen and the yoke that tethered two of them to a single point plow in Jesus' day, if you were fortunate enough to own two; but an acre was the amount of land a yoke of oxen could plow up in a day; that was one of the first measures established long ago when plowing was a more familiar part of daily life.

But we're not here today to talk about oxen and plowing and the marvels of modern farming. We're here to consider an offer from Christ to help us live our lives more simply; to help us find life less tedious; to help us find our way in life more directly—spend less time in fruitless searching. We're here to consider an offer from Christ that will bolster our spirits—give us confidence; an offer that can restore hope; an offer that can bring back the joy that becomes more and more elusive with growing responsibilities and liabilities and awareness. We're here to consider Christ's option laid right out in the open—here on the Table—free to any. That option carries the echo of Moses who pushed the people of Israel there on the banks of the Jordan—there on the verge of stepping forward and entering the Promised land; we have that same option as well—to step forward and find that promise of *life*; of peace and of fullness of purpose and of fulfillment.

We're here to listen—all of us; whether we know it all—know all the ways to keep our lives “well” in the spiritual sense of things—know what to do and what not to do and what others “need” to do to get their spiritual houses in order. We're here to listen—all of us; whether we harbor doubts about it all—about God's promise to be with us in life—to help us keep the faith we've heard so much about that we wish we had as strongly as someone else who seems to have it all together. We're here to listen—all of us; whether we've had a hard week and need some comfort or we've had a good week and we come to give thanks; or whether the week is just not right without coming to church finding this fellowship to be essential to a sense of well-being.

Long ago, the Prophet Jeremiah described life like being at a crossroads. There you are, he said with that choice before you of taking one road or another; standing there; and he said to *ask*; to ask God for the “ancient” path—the one that leads to the “good way” and to “walk” in that path where you will find “rest for the soul.” We're all here at that crossroads; one of us no different than the other; day after tedious day we find ourselves at that crossroads with the hundreds of decisions we make; with all the responsibilities we have; with all the choices that are ours; day-after-day we are there and that is why we are here today to listen to this one named Jesus who offers to point out the road that will be “good” for us—the path that will let us find *rest* for our souls; and that is peace that lays deep within us; like another piece of equipment we might consider. I often see the peace within like a gyroscope—that ball that floats within the frame that contains it, and regardless of the motion or tilt of the surface it is on, the ball remains

fixed to the direction it is programmed to. Jesus says we can find that kind of direction within our own souls; that kind of peace; that no matter which way life is going or tilting or spinning out of control around us we remain at rest; grounded to the gift of faith we have; secure in the knowledge we have of God's love. So listen, to what Christ says.

*Come to me, all who labor and carry heavy burdens, 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.*

The offer is here, on the Table before us; an offer to help us go through life—go with us every step of the way. Where would your heart take you? Where would your mind understand you should go? Reach out and offer Christ the yoke you are already bound to. Let him slip in and help you plow deep into the “good” of all this life God has given you. Amen!

“Plow deep” Matthew 11:15-16, 25-30 070608 Mkh