



# BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study



The Heavier Side of the  
Yoke  
5 July, 2026

## Dennis Webster

A weekly reflection based on the teachings at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

Revised Common Lectionary Related

Pentecost 6a  
Zechariah 9.9-12  
Psalm 145.8-14  
Romans 7.14-25  
Matthew 11.15-19, 25-30

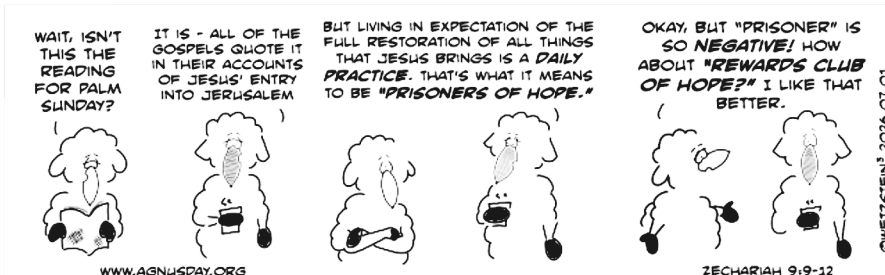


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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

**G**rant, O Lord,  
we beseech thee,  
that the course of this world  
may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance,  
that thy Church may joyfully serve thee  
in all godly quietness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



INTRODUCTION

We often imagine God's kingdom arriving with certainty, strength and spectacle. Zechariah imagines something altogether different: a king riding not on a warhorse but on a donkey. Matthew hears the same invitation from Jesus: "Come to me... take my yoke upon you... for I am gentle and humble in heart."

Perhaps that is why mercy so often goes unnoticed. It rarely announces itself. It is found in quiet communities like L'Arche, in shared burdens, in listening before speaking, in accompanying rather than fixing, and in discovering that Christ has always been carrying the heavier side of the yoke.

Paul knew the struggle of a divided life. We all know what it is to fall short of the people we long to become. Yet Jesus does not ask us to strive harder. He simply says, Come.

Jesus does not promise to remove every burden; He promises to carry the heavier side of the yoke alongside us. This is grace.

Our mission as a church is not confined within these walls—we are called outward, as missionaries of mercy, meeting people with compassion rather than judgment. Each small act done with tenderness becomes the visible hand of God.

So the question before us today is urgent and simple: the gentle King is calling. **\*\*Will you come?\***

This week we are invited to rediscover the quiet strength of God's kingdom—a kingdom where gentleness is power, mercy becomes our language, and ordinary acts of tenderness reveal the heart of God.

Perhaps the question is wonderfully simple.

The flute is still playing in the marketplace.

Will we stop to dance?



As we walk lightly on sacred ground,  
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,  
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

## The Heavier Side of the Yoke

In 1964, a Canadian Catholic priest began a community for people with disabilities and cognitive challenges. That community, L'Arche, now stretches across 37 countries. I have long held a quiet recognition of the work of L'Arche and of the tender ministries of people such as Henri Nouwen. Their lives echo something heartfelt in our mutual journey of faith.

L'Arche reveals God's mercy in the smallest acts. These quiet gestures, woven into the fabric of each day, become the shape of compassion in ordinary life.

Today, we walk with Zechariah and Matthew, and we hear the Comfortable Words. The prophet tells us that God comes as a humble king, not riding a warhorse. Picture a city waiting for a hero, expecting trumpets and banners, a rider on a magnificent horse.

Zechariah says God sends a humble king. Recall Palm Sunday: Jesus enters Jerusalem not on a warhorse but on a donkey, symbolising gentleness. The people wave palm branches and lay clothing to welcome him. The Pharisees want Jesus to stop the crowds, but he responds, if he silences them, the rocks will shout.

Here is the image: a gentle, humble God. The Psalm sings of mercy, not as pity or duty, but as love poured out. Paul recognises the divided heart within each of us. We know the good we long to do, yet so often find ourselves unable to live it.

The Pharisees questioned Jesus. They wanted him to perform, to play their tune. But not everyone fits the world's expectations. These demands often close our hearts. When we let go of what we expect, we meet others with mercy. We see them as they are, as Christ sees us.

This is an invitation into a shared life, a life that tells the story of Christ. He restores what is broken and calls us to come. The Psalms remind us: all creatures depend on God. The church's mission is found in gentleness, in listening, in learning from those the world overlooks.

The kingdom does not come with power or might. It appears in humility, in service, in love, in mercy.

Jesus invites us: take my yoke, learn from me. He does not promise to remove every burden, but to walk beside us. The yoke rests across our shoulders, shared, a sign that we do not walk alone.

Paul speaks of the heavy burden of a divided life. He sees the Roman Christians and the Jewish people, each certain they are right. He lets them build their arguments, only to show how fragile they are. In the end, he calls them to see that all need mercy.

Soon we will hear in Romans chapter 8 that it doesn't matter what is in the way. The most important, central thing of our faith is Jesus Christ our Lord, and nothing. No, nothing will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

The burden Jesus gives is shared. Christ carries the heavier side. What matters most is this: we are never left alone. Whatever we face, we are not alone.

The burden is shared. Christ carries the heavier side.  
That is grace.

In the marketplace, Jesus says wisdom is hidden from the proud and revealed to the little ones. Children complain that neither dancing nor mourning fits. John and Jesus are criticised. The problem is not the noise, but hearts that will not see. Jesus gives thanks: the Father reveals the kingdom to those the world overlooks.

Return to the Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the peacemakers. We are called to let go, to listen with open hearts. The kingdom is seen by those who are ready to receive, not by those who seek cleverness or spectacle.

Jesus offers rest, not only forgiveness. Paul asks, Who will rescue me? Jesus answers, Come to me. He does not say, try harder. He says, Come.

Paul does not ask us to strive to reach God. Faith is not performance. It is participation. It is being with Christ.

We struggle to live the life we long for. The church's mission is carried forward through gentleness, through listening, through learning from those whom the world so often overlooks.

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God's reign comes to those who struggle to see it, to receive it, to live within it. Peace comes not by force, but by undoing violence. Jesus gives thanks: the kingdom is revealed to infants, not to the self-assured. The Messiah invites. God is patient. God is generous.

The Psalmist sings: the Lord is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, rich in

steadfast love. This is not just poetry. It shows us why the kingdom of God is gentle. God's kingdom reflects God's own heart. You open your hand, not a clenched fist. Creation itself echoes the generosity of God.

The kingdom is seen wherever humility becomes strength, mercy becomes power, and the weary find that Christ is already carrying the heavy end of the yoke.

There is something deeply Anglican, perhaps deeply Australian, in knowing that God's greatest work is not found in spectacle, but in silent faithfulness. This is what is woven into a life of journey, of pilgrimage, of seeking, loving, and living.

It is not simple. Some children I know live with cerebral palsy. Some have suffered trauma. Their struggles are not their fault. I remember the story of the blind man. People asked Jesus, Who sinned? Jesus answered, Neither. Life itself would show God's works. In suffering not caused by fault, we see mercy more clearly.

When we meet others with compassion, not judgment, we live mercy. God calls us to look beyond blame, to answer with compassion. Our faith becomes a reflection of God's mercy.

Henri Nouwen was surprised to be asked to serve as chaplain at L'Arche. Why him, a theologian, a writer? Yet there he learned what love means. He saw those around him as fellow human beings, made in God's image, bearing the mark of the divine. Many in the world look away. Why should we?

We are constantly told to strive for an ideal. Long ago, a new nation's founders said all are created equal. But they did not say the meek will inherit the earth. Our true calling is to embody mercy and love, to let our actions reflect God's heart. At the conference, we were told, as clergy, that we should spend more than half our time outside. We are missionaries to the outside world, not just inside. To foster growth in mercy and compassion, people must come through. Our doors aren't the starting point. Each week, our lay reader urges you to go—peace, love, serve the Lord. You have a mission: go.

As we carry this message beyond our walls, let us look for simple ways to live out mercy and compassion. Each small act, done in Christ's name, brings comfort and hope. In these acts, we become the visible hands and feet of God's compassion. The image of the ox's yoke brings comfort. But the centre of our mission is this: to love justice, to show mercy, and to walk humbly with God.

Perhaps the question is not whether we are strong enough, wise enough, or faithful enough. The question is whether we are willing to walk with the gentle King and to receive the mercy we ourselves need.

To carry one another's burdens, knowing that Christ is already carrying the heavier side of the yoke.

To discover, like Henri Nouwen at L'Arche, that those whom the world overlooks often become our greatest teachers of love.

"Love doesn't mean doing extraordinary or heroic things. It means knowing how to do ordinary things with tenderness. So we will live each day with new Hope, like children, in wonderment as the sun rises and in thanksgiving as it sets."

Love is not about doing extraordinary things, but about doing ordinary things with tenderness. Perhaps that is what the kingdom of God looks like. Not spectacular. Not triumphant in the world's eyes. Simply faithful. Gentle. Merciful.

So when Christ says,

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, 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."

Will you dance, or will you walk past?

## Discussion Questions

- | 1. Where have you encountered quiet mercy?
  - The sermon reflected on God's kingdom arriving gently, not through force but through humble acts of compassion. Mercy often reveals itself in ordinary moments rather than dramatic ones.
  - Where have you recently witnessed—or received—a simple act of kindness that revealed something of God's presence?
- | 2. What burden are you trying to carry alone?
  - Jesus invites the weary to take his yoke, not because life becomes easier, but because he shares the weight with us. Christ always carries the greater burden.
  - What burden have you been reluctant to entrust to Christ or to share with another person?

- | 3. Who teaches you about God's kingdom?
  - Jesus gives thanks that God's wisdom is revealed to "little ones." Communities such as L'Arche remind us that those often overlooked by society frequently become our greatest teachers in faith.
  - Who has unexpectedly helped you see God's grace more clearly? What did they teach you without even knowing it?
  
- | 4. How might mercy shape your daily life?
  - The Psalm celebrates God's open hand, rich in steadfast love. We are called not simply to admire God's mercy but to embody it in our relationships and communities.
  - What one practical act of gentleness, patience or compassion could become part of your daily rhythm this week?
  
- | 5. Will you dance—or walk past?
  - Jesus compares his generation to children calling in the marketplace, yet many refused to respond. God's invitation is still being offered today.
  - Where do you sense Christ inviting you to step into something new? What would it mean to respond with trust rather than hesitation?

This five-day Devotional will take a deeper dive into this weekend's Sermon. Join us as we explore themes of humility, mercy, and grace, gleaned insights from the life of Jesus and the teachings of Scripture. Together, let's embark on a journey to understand how simple acts of compassion can reflect the heart of God.



## Day 1

### Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30

On the first day of our Devotional, we reflect on Jesus' invitation to find rest in Him. In the Sermon, we were reminded that God's kingdom is gentle and humble, revealed through kindness and tender acts. Jesus does not promise a life free of burdens, but He offers a promise of shared weight—a life in which He walks beside us, offering rest for our souls.

This divine yoke is not something to fear, but a graceful reminder that we are never alone. Let us find solace in knowing that our struggles are met with divine strength, and our brokenness is made whole through Christ's unending love.

- Reflect on how you can invite Jesus to walk with you in your daily challenges.
- Consider times when you have felt God's rest. What contributed to those experiences?
- How can you reflect Christ's gentle Spirit in your interactions with others?
  
- Pray for a heart that is open to receiving Christ's rest.
- Ask for wisdom in identifying areas where you need to let Jesus carry your burdens.

## Day 2

### Scripture: Zechariah 9:9

Today, we delve into the prophecy of Zechariah, painting a picture of a humble king who comes not with power and might but with gentleness and peace. This is a stark contrast to worldly expectations and triumphs. Jesus embodies this prophecy as He enters Jerusalem on a donkey, signifying that true leadership and strength lie in humility and service.

Reflect on how Jesus' life challenges the status quo and invites us into a

new narrative of power defined by love and mercy. Let us be inspired to embrace this humble path and seek to be peacemakers and gentle warriors for God's kingdom in our own lives.

- How does the image of a humble king challenge your perception of leadership?
- Where in your life can you choose humility over pride and power?
- Think of someone who embodies this humble Spirit. What can you learn from their journey?
- Pray for the courage to follow the humble path set by Jesus.
- Ask God to help you see opportunities to serve others with humility.

### Day 3

#### Scripture: Romans 7:18-25

Today we explore Paul's writings as he speaks candidly about the inner conflict between our desires and actions. Paul acknowledges the struggle to live a life aligned with our faith, yet he finds hope in Jesus Christ. This passage reminds us that while we may fail, we are rescued by grace that transcends our shortcomings.

Through this, we see the beauty of a faith that is not rooted in performance but in participation—being with Christ rather than striving for righteousness. Let this day be a reminder of our constant need for mercy and the unfathomable love of God that meets us in our weakest moments.

- Reflect on the contrast between your desires and actions. Where do you feel this struggle most?
- Consider how you can invite Christ into this conflict to find peace and resolution.
- How does acknowledging your weaknesses change your relationship with God?
- Pray for strength to align your actions with your faith.
- Seek God's mercy daily, trusting in His grace to guide your journey.

### Day 4

#### Scripture: Psalm 145:8-9

The psalmist beautifully illustrates the nature of God—merciful, compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love. This depiction of God's character echoes throughout the Sermon, emphasising that God's

kingdom reflects His own heart. By opening His hand, God shows us the abundance of His generosity, as creation itself mirrors His goodness.

Let us aspire to embody these attributes in our lives, reflecting God's compassion and generosity to those around us. In this, we learn to see the world through a lens of grace, becoming living testimonies to God's unfailing love.

- Reflect on the attributes of God that resonate most with you. How can you incorporate these in your life?
- Think of a time when you experienced God's compassion. How did it impact you?
- How can you become a conduit of God's grace and love in your community?
- Pray for a heart that mirrors God's graciousness and compassion.
- Ask for opportunities to demonstrate God's generosity in your daily interactions.

### Day 5

#### Scripture: Matthew 5:3-12

On our final day, we return to the Beatitudes, where Jesus highlights those whom the world often overlooks—the poor in Spirit, the meek, the peacemakers. This counter-cultural message invites us to see the kingdom of God in places and people we least expect. It's a calling to live each day with new hope and tenderness, embracing ordinary acts of love as reflections of God's heart.

As we close this Devotional, let us commit to walking humbly with God, seeking justice, and showing mercy in all interactions. In doing so, as Pastor mentioned, we journey not alone but with a community that embodies the Spirit of Christ and invites others to experience this love and grace.

- Reflect on the Beatitudes. Which speaks to your current season of life?
- How can you better see and serve those whom the world overlooks?
- What simple acts can you implement to reflect God's heart in your daily routine?
- Pray for eyes to see God's kingdom in unexpected places.
- Ask for strength to embrace this counter-cultural call to love and serve.

# End notes and further reading

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Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew  
Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John  
Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke  
Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians  
Andrew McGowan [substack.com/@abmcg](mailto:substack.com/@abmcg)  
N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A

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Let your faith and relationships  
be shaped by love and patience  
for God's love is  
revealed in lives, not letters.



## Tatungalung Totem

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Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Painesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

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Published every weekend, usually on Saturday, AEST.

Biblical Quotes are from The New Revised Standard Version - Anglicised, which is © 1990 the National Churches of Christ, USA.

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