

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

GIVING WHINING A REST

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

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Analysis by Paige G. Evers

16 “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 17 ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; 19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.” 25 At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 Come to me, all you that 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.”

DIAGNOSIS: Complainers

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Whining*

Throughout Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus doesn’t have good things to

say about “this generation” (v. 16). He calls them “faithless and perverse” (17:17) and “evil” (12:45). In Matthew 11, Jesus paints another negative picture of “this generation.” They are complainers. Like whiny children, they complain to John the Baptist, “We tried to get you to have a good time but you were too serious.” To Jesus, they grumble, “We tried to be serious with you but you were partying too much” (v. 17). They criticize John and Jesus for not responding to them as they expect or desire.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – Rejecting

Nothing John or Jesus do will satisfy this generation. John lived in a restrained and ascetic way, and they accused him, saying “‘He has a demon'” (v. 18). Jesus did the opposite, dining with outcasts. They found fault with him as well, saying “‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” (v. 19). Their nitpicking of these two men points to a deeper dissatisfaction. Their hearts refuse to accept the ones whom God has sent. They reject John because he challenges them too much. He suggests that they aren’t right with God on their own, no matter how they behave. They reject Jesus because he’s too soft on sinners, such as those other people with whom he eats and drinks. Caught up in their dissatisfaction, they refuse to examine themselves. They fail to recognize their own need to repent. But there’s a bigger problem. In complaining about and rejecting John and Jesus, they reject the God who sent them.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – Missing Out

The people can complain all they want about John and Jesus, but in the end, Jesus warns, “wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (v. 19). Jesus, the Son of God, has been performing the deeds of the Messiah (11:2-6). His ministry and miracles show that he embodies divine wisdom (13:54). He will be vindicated. The people’s complaining, dissatisfaction, and failure to repent will run its course. Thinking that they are wise, they will find

that when it comes to forgiveness and salvation, God has “hidden these things from the wise and intelligent” (v. 25). They will discover that they don’t have John, or Jesus, or God figured out after all, since “no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (v. 27). Not only do they not have God figured out, they do not have God at all. Their whining shows that he has not been revealed to them. They will find that God has left them alone with their growing list of complaints.

PROGNOSIS: Inviters

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – Revealed

But the astonishing good news is that God does forgive the grumblers who complain all the way to Jesus’ cross. The cross is where the Son reveals the Father (v. 27) as the God who forgives sinners. Not because God gives in to their complaints, but because God chooses to forgive them by his “gracious will” (v. 26). The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus reveal God’s will and explain the saying, “wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (v. 19). The resurrection is the vindication of Jesus, the crucified One. It shows that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, sent to be “God with us” (1:23, NIV). Jesus makes forgiveness and new life possible for those who believe he is who he says he is.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – Yoked

Jesus invites his hearers to experience deep in their hearts the freedom that comes from forgiveness and new life. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,” Jesus says, “and I will give you rest” (v. 28). The people can let go of their complaints and dissatisfaction and grasp onto this word of promise instead. Jesus encourages them to cast off the heavy yokes of their own making and to embrace the gift that God offers: “rest for your souls” (v. 29). This rest comes by following Jesus’ call to “take my yoke upon you and learn from

me; for I am gentle and humble in heart” (v. 29). When one puts on Jesus’ yoke, she finds not only rest, but the satisfaction that she has longed for, the satisfaction that comes from knowing the gentle and humble heart of Jesus alone.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – Accompanying

Wearing Jesus’ yoke and delighting in the freedom he offers, the people of “this generation” (v. 16) and every generation have the opportunity to extend Jesus’ invitation to others. Complainers become inviters as the joy of knowing what God has done for us overflows from our hearts to our lips. Jesus himself gives us the words to convey his promise: “come to [Jesus] all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and [he] will give you rest” (v. 28). We can even share the burdens of others as we walk with them, trusting that Jesus will give them rest for their souls just as he has given us rest for ours.