

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

DO YOU SEE THE OX'S YOKE IN THE STABLE?

The yoke of an ox is likely an image many of us are unfamiliar with, unless, of course, we regularly spend time in barns or stables. For the unfamiliar, a yoke is a wooden crosspiece fastened over the neck and shoulders of a pair of oxen to help them pull a heavy load or wagon. From birth to the worst kind of death, Jesus understands and feels with us the deepest and heaviest of our burdens, and so uses the image of a yoke to articulate that companionship in the gospel today. Jesus promises us rest if we simply turn toward him.

However, rather than magically erasing our concerns, fears and worries, Jesus explains that we are to take on his yoke and learn from him, such that we can find rest for ourselves. Our rest is not inactive. We are called to the creative work of being attentive to our own sense of spirituality, attentive to intentional connections with the Divine and attentive to how we use that connection with God to make concrete change in the world.

Jesus's call to rest this Advent is one of empowerment and invitation. Resting in Christ and nourishing our spirituality gives us the faith and hope we need to follow him. The late civil rights leader and representative John Lewis offers this insight, "I discovered that you have to have this sense of faith that what you're moving toward is already done. It's already happened. And you live as if you're already there, that you're already in that community, part of that sense of one family, one house." <https://onbeing.org/programs/beloved-community-john-lewis-2/>



The brokenness of our world is being highlighted by pandemic and the sin of racism in our systems, in our communities and in our hearts. When we devote ourselves to learning from Jesus, connecting with Jesus, using what we learn to make concrete change in the world, then we can "live as if" that change is already realized. Only then are we able to truly appreciate the lightness of Jesus's yoke and burden.

One of the important lessons from the yoked oxen which impacts our work for justice is that we don't do this work alone. A yoke connects a pair of oxen, enabling them to share the burden. As a community, our burdens are yoked together. Racial justice is a job for all of us, not merely those impacted by racism directly. Arguably, it is a job most especially for those least impacted, that we might use our privilege for good. Working together toward economic justice, combatting ableism, nationalism, misogyny, homophobia, etc. — building a society, building the Kingdom of God — means we work together to share our burdens such that all can flourish.

How can you deepen the ways in which you choose to learn from Jesus? How are you using what you learn to work toward an anti-racist, just, compassionate and equitable world?

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