

**Sunday, July 5, 2020**  
**Fifth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Pastor Barnes: The War Within**

**Texts: Romans 7:15-25; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

*You are great, O God, and greatly to be praised. You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*

*Grant that we may believe in you, call upon you, know you, and serve you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, Our Savior and Lord. Amen.*

I heard someone say once.... maybe more than once.... "I have a clear conscience."

Is that even possible? I mean, really....no second guessing, no wondering, did I make the right decision, what if I am wrong kind of thing?

I used to think that when Jesus said.... take my yoke upon you, it had to do with the burden of sin and guilt....

Maybe in part.... but the greater part is Jesus yoke of compassion, caring, grace and understanding He so freely gives....

Jesus yoke is what we learn FROM him, not just what He can lift away from us.

When Jesus says.... take my yoke upon you. A yoke is a carved collar made of leather and wood. It is placed on a pair of oxen to keep them working together as they pull a plow or something else.

The teachers (Rabbis) also described the task of obeying the Torah (God's instruction or law) as a yoke.

But here:

Jesus invites his followers to put on HIS yoke,  
Or teaching....

Which is not heavy but easy and light.

It makes the "war within" go easier!"

Does that phrase surprise you?

If not a "war within" .... why would Jesus say: "For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find REST for your soul."

Rest from the war with your soul.

By grace through faith we are saved.... but the war continues.

It is kind of a "catch-22 existence"

St. Paul spoke of this within himself.

It isn't that Christ was not obedient unto death, even death upon a cross...

But that we KNOW the voices within ourselves.

St. Paul says: (Romans 7) "I find it to be a law (not Torah law, but "rule of thumb" if you will) that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self,

But I see in my members (that is, all that I am inside and out)

Another law at WAR with the law of my mind,  
making me captive!"

St. Paul asks: "Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Now, I'm going to date myself!

Name this commercial: "Oh, what a relief it is!" Speedy Alka-seltzer

Plop, Plop, Fizz Fizz, oh what a relief it is! The idea is relief from stomach problems!

But Being at War is our struggle, because this world is not done with us!

But There is relief.... if we understand the war that Jesus waged IS for you and me.

Here is another one: "It's not Easy Being Green"

Yes, Kermit the Frog!

*It's not easy bein' green it seems you blend in with so many other ordinary things.*

*And people tend to pass you over 'cause you're not standin' out like flashy sparkles on the water or stars in the sky.*

*But why wonder, why wonder I am green and it'll do fine*

*It's beautiful and I think it's what I want to be.*

Maybe we could sing or say.... I'm fine because I put on Christ for my life.

Jesus knows the war within that is being waged!

Don't you find it interesting that The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted right after He was baptized?

Baptism is the breath of God coming into our lives....

The Spirit as a Dove alighted on Jesus and said: "this is my Son."

Jesus takes up OUR battle.....the desert of temptation provided not some spectacular - war of wills.....but the simple things, that we all go to battle with.

1 - Food – not from stones, but at what cost from others?

2- Life – not frivolously given away, but falling for worldly ideas that angels aren't meant to catch you from, lest we dash our foot against a stone. (Psalm 91:9-12)

3 - Worship – not that we give allegiance to the devil from the temple tower.....but allegiance is often more subtle with things that are within our reach.

Jesus each time to the temptation said: "you should not tempt the Lord your God." I guess I always thought this was about Satan tempting Jesus, the Son of God.

But what if it is also about our temptation to turn away from God by what we choose to do?

Hence St. Paul – "for I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."

You don't think we are at war?

How about:

People young and old. Bullied or back from war – can't handle this world and decide to leave it. And other reasons.

People young and old. Don't have or can't afford health care and even with care, a battle because of fragile health.

People young and old. Blamed for something not their fault or are misunderstood. Imprisoned either literally or inside their being.

**\*\*Jesus does not give to us "rules" to follow .... but a life to live.\*\***

Those are some of the big things.... but this war within is in all things:

Myriad "weights" we carry and battle with.

Diets for health are a struggle. Lists to follow of things to do are a struggle. Tasks that should be accomplished because we have set them before ourselves are a struggle.

Not all bad...but the battle comes when you can feel the weight upon your shoulders. When your heart is heavy with anxieties and anticipation of getting done.

Do we understand how Jesus releases you from these weights?

"For I am gentle and humble in heart, finding rest for your souls," he says.

Jesus even relates to the living of lists and expecting returns...Our Gospel:

Matthew 11:16-19 <sup>16</sup> “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

<sup>17</sup> ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

<sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; <sup>19</sup> 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.”<sup>[a]</sup>

This war within isn't about the wise and intelligent of the world...rather the infants of trust.

It does not mean troubles will simply go away. It does not mean we will not have difficult days...

I'm reminded of Matthew 6: 25-34 about worry and trust:

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,<sup>[a]</sup> or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

<sup>31</sup> Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But strive first for the kingdom of God<sup>[c]</sup> and his<sup>[d]</sup> righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

<sup>34</sup> “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Notice worrying is a war of wanting to carry the yoke, the burden on your own.

\*\*Clearly in verse 34 it says nothing about troubles going away.\*\*

But a peace that passes all understanding of worries.

It finds gentleness in the yoke of understanding that Christ Jesus gives.

**What** keeps me tossing and turning at night – unable to go to sleep or stay asleep?

**What** is it that keeps me reaching for the “anti-acid” pills more often than I should?

**What** keeps my blood pressure higher than should be and taking pills to keep it lower?

Yes, there are troubles enough for each day. But who holds the troubles? You alone?

Worry is you alone? Jesus says...take MY yoke upon you for I am gentle and lowly in heart.

Jesus uses an illustration – vs. 17 We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.

In other words ...the people of the time looked for what THEY expected of Jesus.

The people of the time thought if they did things their way....no worries!

“But you did not dance”, they say.

You see, part of the worrying is also part of lacking trust that Christ Jesus is with you always.

We say: I have a plan. This is what I shall do. And, if I do this, then You, O God, should follow my plan.

Jesus says of the birds of the air and flowers of the field...are you not of more value than these.

Troubles are not dismissed. But worries cause ulcers with no uptick!

Here is a refrigerator magnet quote:

Proverbs 27:1 "Do not boast/brag about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring."

When you face each day the question comes – "who will see you through?"

Deuteronomy 8:17 - Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth."

Too often the worries and anxieties are surely connected to believing that it is by MY power and might and my own hand.

St. Paul says: "So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand."

The problem: We begin to think we CAN turn stones to bread. We begin to think we CAN go into dangerous situations and God's angels will catch us, lest we dash our foot against a stone.

Who are we tempting?

We are weary and carrying a heavy load during these times.

Troubles abound with no clear conclusion.

But, we do have ONE conclusion...Jesus offers you and me HIS yoke and we SHOULD learn from him...

We need rest for our souls and using an over-worn phrase – "Jesus IS the answer."

During the troubled waters we are wading through, I find great comfort in Isaiah 43:1-3:

But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob,

And He who formed you, O Israel:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have called *you* by your name;

You *are* Mine.

<sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you;

And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.

When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned,

Nor shall the flame scorch you.

<sup>3</sup>For I *am* the LORD your God,

The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

Mary Ann Sundby in Hope-Full Living said this: (June 27)

"I often write out my 'to do' list of activities to tackle tomorrow.

Sometimes I plan as if tomorrow belongs to me. I might even announce my plans and organize the route to accomplish my errands – as if the day will unfold as I envision.

But day after day, I awake to find God pulls me in another direction..."

Question – Do we worry? Do we trust? Do we take Jesus' yoke learning the load in love he bears for you/me?

Troubles can be teaming...please take to heart –

**Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in and through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen!**