

SERMON FOR SUNDAY 14A

It seems we are unable to escape the news now days. Particularly my generation who seem to be connected all the time. I have to admit it becomes overwhelming sometimes. It made me think about the times when I have been on holiday overseas for extended periods. I often don't read the news and I think a part of been relaxed on holiday is the fact that we become disconnected from the news and what is going on in the 'world'.

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- what a joy it was to have that realization
- it seemed as though I was freed
- it felt that a huge weight would descend on me if I went back to watching news, or reading newspapers
- of course that's what holidays are for
- holidays are an opportunity to do something different and forget the usual concerns of life
- returning from holidays and getting back to newspapers and news reports brings back that sense of gloom
- as you know news seems mostly bad

- in ancient times the bearers of bad news were often killed
- perhaps we need to kill off the news and not take so much notice of it
- maybe that's good from time to time
- I fear though that not to see the news would leave us with a distorted view of the world and a distorted view of our own society

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- the news, bad as it may seem, is important
- it tells us about the plight of people in trouble
- it tells us of the concerns of leaders and their efforts to bring peace
- it tells of the struggles of people to find freedom and new life
- it tells of the agonies of those who suffer because of our inhumanity to one another
- the news is really about the struggle of all of us who in our own particular circumstances have to come to terms with what life gives us
- the news is about the search we all have to find meaning to our existence
- the news tells us and shows us that life is burdensome and oppressive for many

- it tells and shows us the struggles of people to find meaning, and purpose in the midst of their burdens and oppression

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- we all have our particular burdens to bear
- some have the opportunity to put them aside for awhile
- others must live with them day in and day out
- Jesus said 'Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke 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.'
- I'm aware this is a well known and loved verse of scripture, but I wonder what it really means to one who is burdened?
- how can we find some meaning for ourselves and bring some relief to others?
- 'my yoke is easy' says Jesus

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- a yoke is a carefully shaped piece of wood which fits across the necks of two oxen
- the purpose of a yoke is to make the task of pulling a plough or a cart, easier
- if two beasts are joined together for the task, it's easier for each than if one does it alone
- when Jesus says to come to him with our heavy burdens its got something to do with this sharing of them that helps to make them lighter
- Jesus spoke a lot about getting rid of burdens
- he wanted to help carry the load and make burdens lighter
- he accused the Scribes and Pharisees, the church hierarchy of his day, of putting burdens on people that shouldn't be there
- these burdens oppressed people instead of freeing people

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- there were things like not being allowed to heal on the Sabbath day
- so Jesus comes along and heals a lame man on the Sabbath
- by that action Jesus says 'take away that burden of outdated religious rules
- Jesus accused the political powers of his time of having put the burden of submissiveness on people
- he said 'you know that your political leaders rule over you calling themselves your masters
- throw that burden away - its not how it should be with you
- you should be servants of one another

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- Jesus also spoke about burdens we put on ourselves
- when the rich young man came to Jesus asking 'What should I do?' Jesus says 'Take the burden of wealth

from your shoulders, sell everything, start a new life.'

- so Jesus wants to lighten the religious, political and individual loads that people carry
- some are of our own making, others are forced on us
- I believe in our Gospel Jesus invites us to do two things
- one is that when we are burdened we can take these burdens to him
- we will do that in whatever way we may find appropriate and helpful
- each of us will acquire ways of doing that

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- the second thing Jesus invites us to do in this Gospel is more difficult but very necessary
- Jesus asks us, his body, to do what he did
- he asks us either as individual Christians, or as the Church together, to yoke ourselves to those who carry burdens
- we are asked to stand with those who carry heavy loads and shoulder the load with them

- that's why the Church talks about and seeks to change, systems which oppress people
- its why the Church talks about and seeks to change the minds of politicians and governments when they become oppressive
- its why the Church aligns itself with oppressed and burdened people wherever they may be

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- and we are the Church, the body of Christ
- this is our special duty - to be yoked to those who are burdened and so lighten their load
- it was Jesus concern - it is now ours

- "Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and learn from me. My yoke is easy and my burden is light."