

"Take a Load Off."

Gen. 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67; Ps 8;

Matt. 11: 16-19, 28-30

Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church

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It is good to be back with you after a bit of a "western sojourn". It was good to gather with Presbyterians from across the country and from around the world for the 218th General Assembly that met from June 20th to 28th in San Jose.

The Scripture theme for the Assembly was taken from the book of Micah, chapter 6, verse 8: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and love kindness and walk humbly with your God?" That theme wove its way through the time of the Assembly. It was the focus for daily worship and often was quoted in the midst of the deliberations on the business coming before the Assembly.

Preparing for the Assembly involved a lot of reading and enduring a barrage of mailings and calls from those wanting to plead their case and gain a hearing. It seemed like a weighty responsibility (which it was) and one that I had successfully avoided for 20 years of ordained ministry! There was a burden that seemed to become increasingly heavy as the time for the Assembly drew near.

I am sure that part of the perceived burden had to do with not knowing exactly what was in store. That is a very common feeling when we are getting ready for a new job, a new school, a new experience that we cannot fully understand until we have gone through it.

Having plenty to read beforehand and receiving many announcements about the business that would be coming to the Assembly for action meant that we were all very well aware of many of the "hot button" topics on the agenda. That added to the burden.

As in today's Gospel reading, it was also true for many of us at the Assembly that coming to Jesus, focusing on him and upon the call of God to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God, allowed some of that burden to be eased.

It's not that the work became easy or the decisions became simple, rather it was that sense of "soul rest" that comes when one truly believes that God is in charge and the outcomes are in God's hands.

The image of Jesus' yoke came to mind as we were flying across the mountains and deserts looking down at that rugged terrain and trying to image the settlers heading west with their team of oxen pulling the wagon. A poorly matched team is a problem long before the supplies start running low and long before the trail becomes faint.

It is important for the oxen to be pulling together. As followers of Jesus we are invited to take on his yoke and to pull alongside of him. Following his lead and trusting in his love we find that the burdens we carry are eased and the journey is less treacherous because we know that we can put our full trust in the one who came that we might have fullness of life.

Jesus invites us to come to him and find rest. He invites us to take his yoke upon us and learn from him. He will show us the way. That was my prayer through the time of the Assembly and

it is my prayer today. Jesus' gentleness and humility, his obedience to God's will and his embodiment of wisdom, these are the qualities that we as individual disciples and as the church need to keep in the forefront as we seek to follow Jesus where he leads us.

Today he leads us to the Table. He invites us to "taste and see that the Lord is good and blessed are all who put their trust in him". Once again we remember that Jesus is not only our companion in the journey of faith, he himself is the spiritual food we need to