

Sermon by Rev. Lusmarina Campos Garcia

On Matthew 11:16-19; 25-30

July 6 2008

Between burdens and yokes, a kite and a flower.

Rubem Alves tells a story about a kite that was made by a boy who enjoyed very much playing with kites. He liked this one so much that he put a smile right in the middle of it. And he spent days making it fly. But one day, while flying, the kite saw a flower and fell in love with it. The kite found the way to free itself from the hands of the boy and gave its line to the flower to handle it. How happy both were together! The kite would fly higher and higher and when coming back, would tell the flower all it had seen. But one day, the flower started being envious and jealous. To envy is to feel unhappy with the things others have and we don't. To be jealous is to suffer when the other is happy and we are not. Because of these two feelings, the flower started thinking: if the kite really loves me, it would not be so happy when it is far away from me. And when the kite came back, the flower was sorrowful and bitter, always asking questions about where the kite had been and who it had seen. Then the flower started shortening the line, not allowing the kite to fly high any longer. The line was shortened and shortened to the point that the kite could only fly on top of the flower.

According to the author, this story still didn't end. There are three possible ends for it: 1. The kite, tired of the flower's behavior, decided to cut the line and look for a less controlling hand.

2. The kite, even though it was saddened by the flower's attitude, decided to stay, but never smiled again.

3. The flower realized that her behavior was based on nothing; it was meaningless. Then a completely unexpected thing happened, the flower wished so much to fly together with the kite that one day, the flower became a butterfly and they both flew together.

I was reminded of this story when thinking of burdens and yokes and our capacity to produce and reproduce them. There are burdens that are brought to us by external forces and yokes that are imposed by unpredictable powers. Politics and economy, for instance, are two powers that determine our way of living but we normally do not have much influence on them. An illness does not usually enter our bodies by our own decision. But there are burdens and yokes that come from within us that keep us from being "gentle and humble in heart," to use Jesus' words. We sometimes make a storm out of a drop of water, a war out of a word, a quagmire out of a thought, such as a mountain out of a mole hill. And sometimes our actions even don't correspond to our wishes. We do what we don't want to do and don't do what we want to, says the apostle Paul. How to deal with this complexity within us, with our capacity to duplicate burdens and yokes, with our jealousy and perhaps envy, with our insecurities and fears that prevent us to recognize truth beyond ourselves?

"Learn from me," says Jesus, "for I am gentle and humble in heart." To learn from Jesus is to learn "from the actions and words of Jesus the liberator, revealer and teacher, a life of alternative practices, structures, priorities, relationships and perspectives," says Warren Carter. "It is to further his liberating work through proclamation and action," Carter continues. To learn from Jesus is to be open to take Jesus' yoke. Jesus says, "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." To learn from Jesus is to learn "to take it easy." It doesn't mean that everything in life is to be taken lightly, but it does mean that not everything in life is to be taken heavily. Seriousness is not the same as scowling and deep commitment does not exclude playfulness. Unfortunately those concepts are mixed and we live as institutions and as individuals under the pressure of a formality that is not sympathetic and a rigidity that tie us up. To be serious is different from being rigid. When did we start mixing those notions? I want to go back and learn with Jesus again, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

"Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart." Scholar Carter says that the word gentle refers to "the powerless and humiliated righteous who do not take revenge on (or imitate) the wicked by resorting to violence, but who live faithfully and expectantly in trusting God to save them and transform unjust

structures." Carter continues, "humble is essentially a synonym, the righteous lowly who lack resources but who witness God overthrowing the rich and powerful." Jesus is one of these, humble disposed people who has only his words, convictions, faith, and a clear notion of his identity. He has his Father, whom he knows; a Father who "have hidden this things from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to infants."

Interesting how often the image of infants is brought up in this morning's Gospel reading. They are either a metaphor for "this generation" who criticize Jesus and John, unsatisfied and unable to see truth beyond themselves, or the only ones able to receive the wisdom of God.

And our generation, to what will Jesus compare it? To a kite or to a flower? A possessive flower that in order to control, cuts the very possibility of the kite be who it is â its capacity to fly? A submissive kite that in order to preserve its love will never smile again? A liberated kite that doesn't accept to loose its identity? Or perhaps a liberated flower, who after seeing the burdens and yokes she created, was able to evolve into a butterfly and fly together with its kite?

Is our generation recognizing Jesus true identity, the Son of God, the one who liberates us to live as a free people? The one who offers us a way through our capacity to produce and reproduce burdens and yokes? Are we open to learn from Jesus "a gentle and humble heart" and to take his "yoke" that is "easy", and his "burden" that is "light"?

Between burdens and yokes, there is a kite and a flower.

Amen.