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## *Whose Yoke Will You Put On?*

**A sermon by the Rev. Nate Huddleston  
St. Francis Sunday – Year A**

The author Terry Hershey tells this story:

In the beginning God didn't make just one or two people, God made a whole bunch of us. Because God wanted us to have a lot of fun and he said you can't really have fun unless there is a whole gang of you. So God put us all in this sort of Playground Park called Eden and told us to enjoy.

At first we did have fun, just like God expected. We played all of the time. We rolled down the hills, waded in the streams, climbed the trees, swung on the vines, ran in the meadows, frolicked in the woods, hid in the forest, and acted silly. We laughed a lot.

Then one day this snake told us that we weren't having *real* fun because we weren't *keeping score*. When the snake explained it, we still couldn't see the fun. But then he said that we should give an apple to the person who was the best at playing and we'd never know who was the best unless we kept score. We could all see the fun of that. We were all sure we were the best.

It was different after that. We yelled a lot. We had to make up new scoring rules for most of the games we played. Other games, like frolicking, we stopped playing altogether because they were hard to score.

By the time God found out about our new fun, we were spending about 45 minutes a day playing and the rest of the time working out the score. God was wroth about that; very, very wroth. God said we couldn't use his playground garden place anymore because we weren't having any fun. We said, "We were having lots of fun." And we were. But God wouldn't listen to us. God kicked us out of the garden. Then God said, "You can't come back to Eden until you stop keeping score." Then God said, "To get your attention I am going to tell you something. Someday you are all going to die anyway and your scores won't mean a thing."

I think God was just rubbing it in. God shouldn't have gotten upset just because it wasn't the kind of fun God had in mind.

Anyway God was wrong. My cumulative all game score is now 16,548 and that means a lot to me. If I can raise it to 20,000 before I die, I'll know I will have accomplished something.

Really, it was life in Eden that didn't mean anything. Fun is great in its place, but without keeping score there is no reason for it. God has a very superficial view of life. I am glad that my family is being raised away from God's influence. We were lucky to get out of Eden.

We are very grateful to the snake.

What drives you? Or as Paul <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> what is the prize to which you are running? As Jesus talks about, What Yoke are you putting on? Who are you following?

Everyone is driven by something, running to something or is it away from something. People can be driven by pleasure, possession, prestige, or power. But I know you know better than that. You are much wiser in the ways of the world. So I ask you this question: What is the purpose of your life? Hear me clearly, not life with a capital L, but **YOUR LIFE**. In the days when you sit back in your easy chair and mentally flip through the scrapbook of your life, what will have been your greatest failure, your greatest regret, your greatest

achievement, what will have been the thing for which you were the most proud?

So again I ask: What drives you? What is the prize to which you are running? What yoke are you putting on? The answer you give to this question will be the most important one you have ever given, for your very life depends on it.

It is all too common for us to seek meaning in the lives and experiences of others and even to live vicariously through that second-hand meaning. It is not the task of theology or religion to amuse us with alien meanings and other worlds, but instead to help us find our own meaning in our own world. It does so by helping us discover that God is incarnate in our own lives, in our particular locations, and in our own sacred journeys. And I believe that! I think of my life and of the lives of everyone who has ever lived, or will ever live, as not just journeys through time but as sacred journeys. Frederick Buechner writes: "The question is not whether the things that happen to you are chance things or God's things because, of course, they are both at once. There is no chance thing through which God cannot speak---even the walk from the house to the garage that you have walked ten thousand times before, even the moments when you cannot believe there is a God who speaks at all anywhere. He speaks, I believe, and the words he speaks are incarnate in the flesh and blood of our selves and of our own footsore and sacred journeys." (*The Sacred Journey*, page 77-78)

In other words, you have been called. Your calling is the work that you have been called to do in this world. It is what you are to spend your life doing. It is only by fulfilling your calling that you will reach the prize. By and large a good rule for finding your calling is this: God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) the world most needs to have done. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

What will you be driven by as you live this place, with these people, in this part of the journey of your life? How many points will you have at the end of your life? Will you be true to the calling that has been given to you by God? Will you live up to the life that is flowing in your hands and in your blood—that is, Will you run to the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus?

Jesus' words echo with a deep whisper that calls to each of us in our own life. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, 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." Will you have the courage to lay down the burdens of the world and answer the call of Jesus?