

Jesus said, “To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ‘*We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.*’”

Children in the marketplaces – I grew up in the 1980’s which means, I grew up at the mall; at the Tacoma Mall to be specific. If you’ve never been to the Tacoma Mall that’s okay because it’s like the one you are familiar with – it has a main entrance with an indoor fountain, it has major department stores anchoring it at each end, a food court, a children’s play area, and a variety of different shops that make the place interesting. The Mall was a hub. It was a place to hang out. To watch people and to be seen.

I am a part of the X Generation – born between 1965 and 1975. If I can speak for my entire generation; they wouldn’t let me; but, if I could, I’d say that we learned things that were true at the Mall and things that are lies. What is true – friendship is friendship. You can hang out together, shop, eat, or just walk around. Friends are friends and it doesn’t matter what age. We saw kids of all ages with friends and we saw adults of all ages doing the same thing we were. You can sit with your friend at the food court, walk around, do whatever for three hours and it goes by in a blink of an eye. Today, if I showed up at the Mall with Geoff, Brian, Chris, Todd, Gary; you know, all of them; if we showed up today, we’d just continue where we left off in 1988. Friends are friends – the marketplace taught us that.

We were also taught something at the Mall that has turned out to be a lie. The Mall says shopping will make you happy. Happiness in the form of retail is this: if you just buy enough stuff, you’ll be happy. Sure, shopping is fun. It’s necessary. But, happiness is not found in the collection of stuff.

The Mall is the closest thing that I can relate to Jesus’ words of “children at the marketplace”. In his day, the marketplace was where everyone gathered. They didn’t have refrigeration so they had to go to the market every day. It was a necessity and a social thing too. Kids were there. Some were there because their parents were retailers. Some were being apprenticed. They were all there listening and learning. I’m not sure where kids hang out today but back then, and in my generation, it was the marketplace.

To what will I compare this generation; it is like children in the marketplace, playing the flute but no one danced. Have you ever been to a Kindergarten graduation? It is so precious. The kids stand up in front and sing songs that they have practiced. They use hand motions. And, inevitably, they invite the crowd to sing with them and do the hand motions. Can you imagine going to a Kinder graduation and none of the parents or grandparents sing, or clap, or move their hands at all? What if everyone just sat there, arms folded, and watched the children perform and say goodbye to their teacher and receive a certificate of achievement for completing

Kindergarten and moving into Elementary school. ... but nothing from the parents or grandparents. What would you say about that generation?

We have all seen the pictures of John F. Kenney's funeral procession and the looks on the faces of his children. Mourning; shock; duty; disbelief; horror. It was all there on their faces. And you remember it – it moved you like it moves me. Children who mourn move us. Imagine the generation, however, that is not moved by children mourning.

I hear Jesus talking about a group, a generation, of adults who were focusing on something else. They were weighed down and concerned about other things – so much so that they would not smile when children dance and sing; they would not tear up when a child is crying. They were weighed down and focused on something else. Was he talking about the generation in his lifetime, or the 12th century, or ours, or all of them? Something happens when we move into adulthood and lose our sense of being children; of just hanging out with friends in the marketplace. Of crying with friends when they were sad or sick, and laughing with them when we they were happy.

It is said that the generation in Jesus' day were seeking happiness in four ways: military might, political power, individual wealth, and intellect/wisdom. It should be said that happiness and connection with God were intertwined so it can be argued they were seeking a connection with God in military might, political power, individual wealth or intellect or wisdom. They were falling for the lie of the marketplace – if you acquire enough stuff, you'll be happy. That lie made it so they couldn't have fun like children or be moved like children. They were seeking something else.

Jesus talked about different type of connection. For those seeking God in military might, or political power, or wealth or seeking wisdom, Jesus said, "If you know me, you know Who Sent me; if you welcome one of my disciples you welcome me and the One Who Sent me." Happiness, connection with God, is in relationship with Jesus, with one another.

Here is his invitation: come to me all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens; come to me.

Come to me you who are tired, are exhausted, are *ti-red*. Come to me, I will give you rest, he says. The access point to Jesus, and to God, is being weary. Being tired and worn out and burned out. That's how you get to God, through Jesus.

Another access point: you who are carrying heavy burdens. You who are carrying the burden of someone else's health concerns, or your own. You who are caring the burden of an entire family, you who are caring for your parents, your children, your grandchildren. You who are carrying the burden of an ailing spouse. Come to me, says Jesus.

I have to tell you, I've felt the strength, the power, the love of God more when I am tired and worn out and carrying heavy burdens than when I'm full of vigor and excitement. When I'm worn out, Jesus is right there with me. When I am full of anxiety and fear, Jesus is standing with me inviting me to come to Him. It's an access point to God – not through political power, wealth or intellect, but through our pain, our feebleness our exhaustion. Jesus is there.

It's an invitation and a promise – I will give you rest. The world won't give you rest, shopping more won't give you rest, gaining power in the world won't give you rest; the marketplace won't give you rest; Jesus, he will give you rest.

He said, "Take my yoke upon you." Many of you know what a yoke is – a restraint for animals, like oxen to work in the field. A personal yoke is for an individual to carry two buckets of water. We don't use yokes today. So, I like to think of today's yoke as a sense of purpose. Oxen relax when the yoke goes on, they know they have purpose and will be led. Someone carrying two buckets of water with a yoke in Jesus' day had a purpose – they were bringing water to someone.

Come to me, you who are tired, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and learn from me for my burden is light.

Jesus will give you rest and give you a purpose. What is the purpose of children in the marketplace – to learn, to have fun, to make friends. Jesus will give you a purpose. His purpose for you might be to laugh and sing with children. It might be to cry when children are sad. It's his yoke that he gives to you.

I had a parishioner who turned 102 years old in North Idaho. Privately, she said, "I don't know why I am here; I've outlived my husband, I have no kids, all my childhood friends and family have died. Why am I here?" I had just left an Altar Guild meeting at church where several of the women mentioned how they are trying to live their lives, in their 70s and 80s, to be more like her. I told her that and the way I see it, her purpose is to give others inspiration, joy and a sense of purpose with their lives. That was her yoke. She didn't see it; but that is how other saw her, and, I'd say, that is how Jesus saw her too.

We have a parishioner here who will be turning 100 years old in November. Her yoke is felt by many here – they see Marge as an inspiration for how they should be living their lives today.

The easy-and-light-yoke, according to Jesus, is not to say that loving God with all of our heart and loving our neighbors is easy, or light; but, when we are tired, Jesus is with us, lifting our burdens; when we are anxious, Jesus is there to calm us and give us peace. He does not take things off our shoulders without permission. He invites us – come to me – and I will give you rest. Jesus is calling to all of us, in every generation, in every marketplace, to come to him.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.