

I. Intro:**A. Review messages of series**

1. Two weeks ago I condensed the initial invitation of Jesus into this one line: "Come and lay it down!"
2. But Jesus didn't only invite us to bring our burdens to him. He also promised us rest
 - a) Amidst our busy world of exhausting demands, last week, Karla Minter referred to our need not only for physical rest, but also for the deeper rest for our souls that Jesus promises
 - b) Jesus then says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." Next week Velma will explore these words with us.

B. Today let's talk about Jesus' invitation to learn from him ... Keyword today is "learn" ... What does learning from Jesus mean?

II. Let's start with our own associations with this word "learn" ... What does "learning" mean in our world?**A. For most of us, the first thing we associate with "learn" is "school"**

1. Why wouldn't we think that, especially when school just started?
2. Instinctively for most of us, "learning" happens in educational settings like classrooms and lecture halls, inside special school and university buildings constructed just for education
3. When we say someone is a very "learned" individual, we usually mean he/she has had many years of formal education and probably completed one or more degrees beyond high school

B. Yet you and I know that not all learning happens in school

1. (*show of hands for all who are students*) ... How many of you have a period in your study schedule that is typically devoted to subjects like "how to feed yourself" or "how to listen to God"?
 - a) Probably none of you ... There are many lessons we learn outside of school or before we ever get to school
 - b) I remember hearing a parent tell me once why he had pulled his junior-high son out of school for two days, to go along with him to a professional conference. He said, "I'm a firm believer in never letting school interfere with my child's education."
 - c) We don't only learn from the formal lessons our teachers teach us. We also learn from all the good and bad examples that we observe, which nobody actually taught us.

2. More than learning by hearing and seeing things, we learn from trying and doing new things

a) Often the most effective lessons are the ones learned from our failures and not our successes (As a perfectionist, this is hard for me to accept ... as I usually try to get things right the first time)

b) Old saying: "you don't learn anything the second time you're kicked by a mule."

C. So in our world we learn from ...

1. schoolteachers and from everyday modeling ... in the classroom and out in the field or on the street ...

2. by words spoken and experiences gained ... by successes and by failures

3. But what about back in Jesus' day, as he spoke these words?

III. What did it mean when people heard Jesus of Nazareth say, "Come and learn from me"?

A. Well, much like us here today, Jewish people in Jesus' day associated "learning" with formal studies

1. As a rabbi, to learn meant to study God's law (Torah) with a view toward knowing and doing God's will

2. Greek word for "learn" has the same root as the word "disciple/pupil"

a) We too tend to think of a pupil as a learner

b) **And yet** in the New Testament being a disciple has more to do with the verb "follow" than it does with the verb "learn"

c) Maybe you recall Jesus a bit later in Matthew 16:24 saying, "*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.*"

3. This linkage of word "follow" with discipleship should give us an advance clue direct from the Bible ... Tells us that "learning from Jesus" is about much more than just what you know in your head

B. While checking out these words in a New Testament dictionary, I stumbled across a great quote that summarizes well the meaning of "learning from Jesus"

1. In the entry for the words "learn" and "disciple", it said:

*Jesus does not seek to impart information, but to awaken commitment to himself.*¹ (repeat)

2. I love it!

¹ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged ed., p. 554

- a) If we’re going to learn from Jesus, he’s not so interested in us memorizing or analyzing what he said.
- b) Jesus wants us to follow him and **do** what he said!

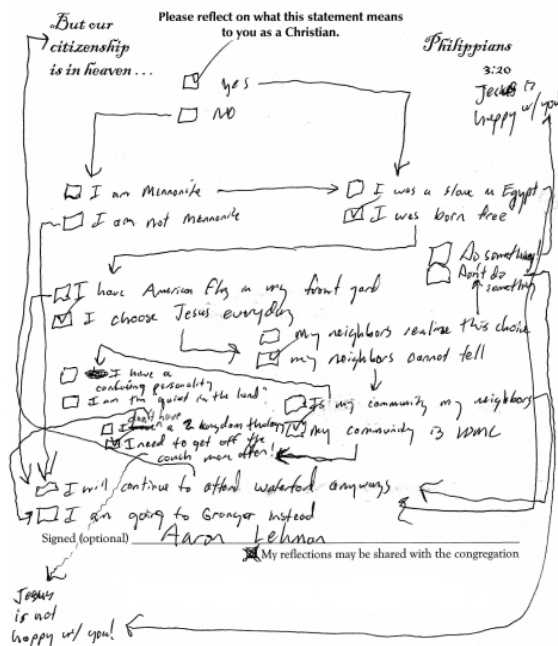
IV. This same truth came to my attention recently in an unusual way ...

A. You may recall three weeks ago we asked you to return your reflections on the statement from Philippians 3:30, “But our citizenship is in heaven ...”

- 1. Many of you did have comments written down, that appeared something like this: *I am part of a community of multi-tongues, nationalities, and declared beliefs without borders.*
- 2. We plan to have these reflections available for you in a week

B. But one particular submission caught my eye for its rather unorthodox visual style

- 1. It came from Aaron Lehman, with help from the Koinonia Sunday school class
- 2. Rather than a straightforward prose answer to the question, Aaron put the class’s thoughts down in the form of a complex flow chart, with many pairs of responses. Each response has an arrow leading to a different pair of check boxes.



- a) There’s far too much detail to go through line-by-line; you can examine it yourself when these reflections get distributed.

- b) Before I highlight what’s relevant today in this flow chart, here’s my little caveat:

- (1) I interpret this flow chart as partially serious, and 100% provocative (kind of like Aaron himself, if you know him)
- (2) I’m not endorsing every choice of wording or the flow of all the arrows in the diagram, but it certainly makes you think and it’s refreshingly different from pages full of words

- 3. So because we may not all be able to read Aaron’s scrawl, let me highlight what it has to do with learning from Jesus

- a) One of the responses is "I choose Jesus every day"
- b) That leads eventually to, "Do something!"
- c) Which then leads to the final outcome, "Jesus is happy with you"

4. Now notice an alternate flow of the arrows:

- a) After "I choose Jesus every day", what if you check the box marked "Don't do something!"?
- b) Well in this view of citizenship, the "do nothing" response leads to "Jesus is not happy with you"

C. So whether or not we agree with how these discipleship trails play out, I do support the fact that choosing Jesus eventually confronts all of us with a hard choice:

1. Now that we say we've chosen Jesus, are we going to actually do something with what we've learned from Jesus, or will it just be head knowledge?

V. Earlier, I asked "What does learning from Jesus mean?" Let me now try to simplify my thoughts into just 2 directions:

A. We learn from Jesus by being Christ-centered in our faith

1. This may sound obvious to some, but it's all about our starting point with faith and Scripture
 - a) Anabaptists have long believed not only that the Bible must be the primary source of our beliefs, but that we read the Bible through a Christ-centered lens
 - b) If we wonder what the Bible says about something, where do we begin looking? Does it matter where in the Bible we start reading?
2. Indeed it does.
 - a) Our tendency in approaching Scripture is not to first look to the Old Testament for guidance, nor to randomly choose any book.
 - b) As the supreme revelation of God in the world, Jesus must be the center through which Scripture is understood

B. We learn from Jesus by becoming Christ-like in our daily life

1. A few decades ago WWJD was everywhere... on wristbands, T-shirts ... Not so huge lately, but as heard in children's time, asking ourselves what Jesus would do is still a valuable exercise
2. Learning from Jesus means we take his life and teachings very seriously as models for our own lives.

3. Time doesn't allow a story for every example I'm about to give, but learning from Jesus means Jesus matters ... in:

- a) Honesty and truth-telling
- b) How women are treated
- c) How we respond to enemies
- d) What we do when someone hurts or offends us
- e) How we use money and other resources
- f) Finding life-giving rhythms of work and rest
- g) The spiritual content that fills our hearts through our daily and weekly habits (Here I want to close with an example I found true in my life ...)

C. One morning earlier this week I was feeling really blah ... didn't feel like doing church work, certainly not writing a sermon

Just wanted to stay home within sight of our lovely backyard garden, the garden that my wife plants but God makes grow ... Suddenly a song by John Michael Talbot jumped into my head, called "Lilies of the field," drawing from Jesus' words telling us not to worry.

I decided to stay home a bit longer, sitting on the back deck with a Bible, hearing a few birds sing and an annoyed chipmunk "chipping" at me because I was encroaching on its home turf underneath the deck. I read, "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." At that moment a hummingbird appeared 15 feet away from me, finding what God had provided for it among the flowers.

I took in with my eyes the beautiful array of edible and non-edible colors as I gazed back and forth across the back yard. I knew deep within that all things come from God, yet my inner cynic said, "Yes, but Janette put all the work into planning, planting, and trimming all these gardens."

Then in the distance, a small burst of orange color caught my eye: There amid the tall grasses and trees at the back of the yard, just beyond the mowed section, was a single bright orange lily in bloom. And immediately I read, "See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin, yet not even Solomon in all of his glory was clothed like one of these."

I began to be aware of various worries I was carrying. Concerns about resources weighed heavy on my mind, hindering my ability to just be in the moment, fully aware of God's goodness, and grateful for God's provisions. And at that moment, some words of Jesus from that teaching nearly jumped off the page at me. Listen to these repeated words:

- Do not *worry* about your life, what you will eat or drink.
- Who of you by *worrying* can add a single hour to your life?
- Why do you *worry* about clothes?
- Don't *worry* about tomorrow, for tomorrow will *worry* about itself.

I gratefully came inside, got out my guitar and sang through that John Michael Talbot song, which soothed my soul even more. Then I realized something important: What had just happened here was in fact one of the ways that "learning from Jesus" happens in our lives:

Over the years we read and re-read the Bible, esp. the precious accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ ... We may not be able to pull them up completely by memory but they reside there within us. Over time, we also expose ourselves to hymns and Scripture songs that bring Jesus to mind. These habits of prolonged exposure to Scripture and Christian worship reveal how we can be "learning from Jesus" even when our minds are not actively looking and listening for him.

This is part of what Karla last week called "the school of life, loving and living." Faith-forming habits from my earlier years, drawing on words and images of Jesus, kicked in for me in a way that sustained me when I needed it. I know it may not always happen like that for me, but this week it did, reminding me of the truth of other words of Jesus: *Wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Just by being here on a Sunday morning when you could have been doing a zillion other things, you too are being exposed once again to Jesus and his life-giving words. Habits like this are the practices we need for a sustainable healthy life.

VI. Conclusion

A. Jesus calls to us still today, saying:

Come to me with your heavy burdens

Come learn from me in the school of life, loving and living.

Center yourself in me.

When you learn my ways, they won't just live up here (head).

They will also live through you to everyone around you.

But the most amazing thing, my child?

Through me, you will find rest *for* your life, not just occasional resting *from* your tired life.

B. Prayer ...