

**Lesson 11. . . Taking on the Yoke of the King
Gospel of Matthew**
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Notes From the Podium
By Fr. Matthew Kauth

***These notes are intended to augment your own reading and study of the lesson.
Please use as an aid to help document the main message of the lecture.***

Matthew 11:1-30

- I. Circulation within the Mystical Body of Christ
 - A. Blood is to our physical body what the Divine life is to Christ's mystical body.
 - B. The Divine Life circulates in along a certain pattern
 - 1. The Father hands over His Son
 - 2. The Son hands Himself over to the apostles
 - 3. The apostles hand him over
 - a. Judas literally hands Him over to death
 - b. The other apostles hand him over in a more pure fashion:
 - i. Sacraments
 - ii. Teaching
 - C. Like blood flow the Divine Life is received by the faithful
 - 1. The faithful return that gift by virtue of their sacrifices, sufferings, and votive offerings made in the Holy Mass.
 - a. This is the opposite flow of the Divine Life coming forth from the people.
 - 2. Bread and Wine
 - a. Offered up through the hands of the priest → the successors of the apostles → through the Son, in the Holy Spirit to the Father.
 - D. "exitus" and "reditus" - the coming forth and the return
- II. Re-Creation
 - A. We came forth from God in the act of creation.
 - B. We fell.
 - C. Re-creation is the means by which we come back to God.
- III. The Nature of Discipleship
 - A. When the apostles are sent out they are expected to return to Jesus.
 - B. We read in the Gospel of John, when Jesus is risen, St. Peter brings the net ashore full of fish to present to our Lord.
- IV. "...he who was to come..." = "Are you the Messiah?"
 - A. John the Baptist sends his disciples to Jesus
 - 1. Why would John's disciples need to ask if Jesus was the Messiah?
 - 2. Where is John?
 - a. John has been arrested.
 - b. He is physically separated form Jesus in the dungeon of Herod.
 - c. He sits in silence and suffering, waiting.
 - 3. John sends his disciples to ask only to be "confirmed" (confirm-to be with faith)
 - a. Confirm – to be with faith; to be with strength
 - b. "Are you the one?"

4. John wants our Lord to shore him up because he's going to give his life for Jesus and wants the strength to fight temptations to doubt.
- B. Jesus Responds:
1. "Go and tell John what you hear and see:"
 - a. John, who now cannot hear or see, turns to Jesus in the darkness of faith.
 - i. Vision without sight
 - ii. Locutions without hearing
 - b. Faith *is* vision to see that which we could never have seen with our own eyes and hear things we could never have heard with our own ears.
 2. "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them."
 - a. Jesus adds to this text of Isaiah information about the Messiah and the dead being raised up.
 - b. Isaiah spoke in the future tense; Jesus speaks here in the present tense.
 - c. Jesus goes beyond the healing of "the" lame man or "the" blind man, but rather heals lameness and blindness itself.
 3. "And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."
 - a. "*skandalon*" (the word "scandal" is a derivative) - A stumbling block.
 - b. John was to prepare the way; he was to remove all of the stumbling blocks from our Lord's feet.
 - c. The "*skandalon*", the rock which stands before your path, is Jesus.
 - i. A living stone; the stone that is rejected by the builders; the one that the church will be built on.
 - ii. This stone is the cornerstone.
 - d. Jesus is telling John, the first of the New Testament prophets and the last of the Old Testament, he will be blessed.
- C. The disciples of John "went away".
1. Their response was to act.
 2. How happy they would have been to tell John that "yes, you have not suffered in vain. Yes, he's confirming you. Yes, you are going to be blessed, John."
- V. Jesus speaks to the crowds concerning John.
- A. "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind?"
1. "Behold" – the word used here is where "theater" is derived from.
 2. We want to be entertained but we don't want to see something that will actually give us revelation.
- B. More than a prophet.
1. "This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.' "
 2. "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist."
 - a. John "leapt for joy" in Elizabeth's womb at the visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
 - b. A play on words - "No one has arisen"
 3. "Yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."
 - a. John does not possess divine life.
 - b. The power to become a child of God is given by Christ.
 - c. That regenerating baptismal blood is given at the cross.

- d. So the very least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest of prophets who did not have divine life coursing through them.
- e. John was born of woman, the greatest born of woman? Yes.
- f. The greatest born of mother church? No.
- g. That the least born of her is greater than any born naturally.
- h. We must be born again, be born anew by the church in baptism, and be given divine life.

VI. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence."

- A. Difficult to translate:
 - 1. Has the kingdom received violence or given it?
 - 2. We don't know.
- B. One could look at this as a praise of those who are violently taking and grabbing hold of the kingdom.
- C. Recall how Jesus strips the apostles down, and clothes them with his own grace and authority, how that they have to take up their cross and follow him.
 - 1. These are not peaceful words. "I have not come to bring peace but a sword."
 - 2. We begin by this "violence" of love, that doesn't cause damage to another but doe to oneself. (the old self must die that the new self might live)
 - 3. St Teresa of Avila once said, if you're not willing to do violence to yourself, you're not worthy of following him.
 - 4. Not self-masochism, not self-loathing, but taking that sword of the Spirit, the sword of truth and cutting out from the heart all that shouldn't be there.
 - 5. These receive the kingdom of heaven because they want it and engage in a passionate pursuit of the kingdom of heaven.
 - 6. Christianity is not an invitation to passivity.
 - a. If you are not climbing you are falling, if you're not swimming against the current, you are floating downstream.
 - b. Fulton Sheen once said, "Dead bodies float down stream."
 - 7. The kingdom of heaven is something we fight for.
 - a. The cross is a weapon of war, tilling the soil of the human heart.
 - b. You carry a cross up to the top of a hill not to then show as a trophy but to be crucified on it.

VII. "But to what shall I compare this generation?"

- A. John the Baptist "came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'"
- B. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'
- C. Those two movements must take place in us,
 - 1. Asceticism, neither eating nor drinking but fasting, doing violence to the old man.
 - 2. The other movement we have is given to us by virtue of liturgical seasons of the Church: feasting, joy, singing.
- D. Those that neither dance nor mourn are indifferent. (Rev. 3:16 "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew ;you out of my mouth.")
- E. "*acedia*" - the sin that oftentimes is translated as sloth and literally means in Greek, to be without care, without concern, without passion, without that fight going on in you.
 - 1. The Church has in her history

- a. The weeping and the Miserere of Lent
- b. The Liturgy of Easter, the Alleluia which the voice was made for.
 - i. The voice was made to be able to sing to the one that we love.
 - ii. The Miserere is for the purpose of the Alleluia.
 - iii. We fast so that we can feast.
- c. If you're not waiting for the bride groom, if you don't even care if He comes it won't make any difference when He does. You can't rejoice in Him.

VIII. "Then he began to upbraid the cities where most of his mighty works had been done..."

- A. "Woe to you, Chorazin!"
- B. "Woe to you, Bethsaida!"
- C. "And you, Capernaum... You shall be brought down to Hades. ...it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."
 - 1. Sodom is an example of passions run amuck.
 - 2. Our passions can turn us into animals, but our pride can turn us into Satan.
 - a. The lower passions when they're turned toward something evil do in fact turn us away from our Lord those passions come from the natural appetites, when we give vent to them we become like animals.
 - b. As we begin to have the certain self-mastery and possess ourselves then we actually become more capable of graver sins, spiritual sins which make us not like animals but more like Satan.
 - c. Satan didn't fall because of his passions run amuck, but because of his pride.

IX. "At that time Jesus declared, "I thank thee, Father."

- A. Matt 11:25, "*apokritheis*" which means "Jesus answered". Who did he answer?
 - 1. Our Lord is always in dialogue with the Father.
 - 2. In this moment, it's as if Jesus answers the Father, "Yes, Father".
- B. Thank you Father "Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes"
 - 1. *infans* and *neipiois* two words with the very same meaning as the word infant, both mean "unable to speak".
 - 2. The infant can't speak, they receive. Those whose voices are not important but whose ears are very important.
 - 3. Matt 11:26 "*nai ho Pater*", "Yes oh Father".
 - a. When our Lord speaks to His Father in the scriptures we have an image of the way He speaks to His Father in his humanity because in a human nature, he can pray.
 - b. Because His divine nature, though always distinct, continuously floods His human nature with the love of the Father, the son overflows in His prayer, "Yes, oh Father".
 - 4. "For such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father."
- C. "...no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."
 - 1. We, the chosen, have the possibility and the reality of being the ones he's chosen to reveal the Father to.
 - 2. To receive the Son's knowledge of His Father, is the definition of Revelation.
 - 3. The Son who is the perfect expression of the Father *is* that knowledge.

4. The Son *is* the living tradition handed over to us.
- D. "Come to me."
1. Who? -All who labor, all who carry the cargo of humanity and all of its fallenness.
 2. Why? -Because I will give you rest.
 - a. The rest He provides is what sleep is to the body or prayer is to the soul.
 - b. The kind of rest that John knew when he laid his head on the breast of the Savior
 - c. The kind of rest that the Son eternally knows as he is in the bosom, of the Father. A holy rest.
 - d. *requiescat in pace* - "rest in peace"
- E. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
1. The "yoke" is one that is made for two oxen and similar to the cross.
 2. A conjugal reality, yoked together, yoked with, two oxen moving, Him leading and carrying the burden with you, up the steps of Calvary to have it be crucified.
 3. The rest comes from the fact that even in the toil and the labor all you need to do is glance to the side because you're yoked to the one that you want to see.
 4. When you falter and if you fall, the yoke doesn't crash down upon you because he bears it himself.
 5. He is meek, gentle, lowly, willing to suffer violence rather than commit it, to suffer an evil rather than to commit it.
 6. He would rather suffer sometimes the violence of our company, than lose our company.
 7. He yokes himself to us and he will not leave.