

October 11, 2020
19TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



"The Calling of St. Matthew"
By Caravaggio

St. John

United Church of Christ

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WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP: from Psalm 149**

(Respond with words in bold type.)

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song.

Sing God's praise in the assembly of the faithful!

Let Israel celebrate its maker; let Zion's children
rejoice in their king!

**Let them praise God's name with dance; let them
sing God's praise with the drum and lyre!**

That will be an hour for all God's faithful people.

Praise the Lord!!

***RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF INVOCATION:**

Come to us, Holy One.

And immerse us in the beauty of life with you!

Come to us, Holy One.

**And enliven our community with the intensity of
your love.**

Come to us, Holy One.

**And embolden our community with the urgency of
your justice in the name of the One who calls us to
play and to work in the community Jesus, our
beloved. Amen.**

***GOSPEL READING: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

"But 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.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!'; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a

glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and 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.

"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."

This is the word of God and can be trusted.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

SERMON: **"Your Burden is Light"** Nancy E.

My message today is inspired by Vance Morgan in his blog, "Freelance Christianity".

We are going back to school today. First up -- art appreciation. Let's look at "The Calling of St. Matthew", by Caravaggio. In this painting the artist uses very high contrasts of light and dark. The light accents the main characters of this story in the painting.



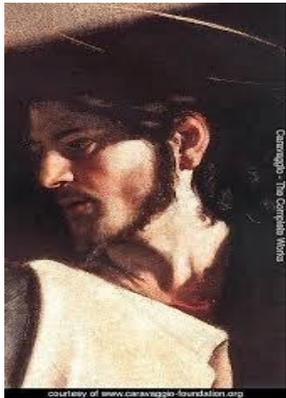
According to Morgan, there is some debate concerning who Matthew is in this painting. Is he the guy with the beard pointing at himself (**"Who, me?"**)?

Or is he the young one counting money and not paying attention, to whom the guy with the beard is pointing (**"Who, him?"**)?

I prefer the latter interpretation -- after all, Matthew was a tax collector, so the indicator of counting money is



appropriate. Either way, there is no debate about the power of light and shadow in this painting. The light shining from a window outside the top right of the canvas illuminates just enough of Jesus' modest



halo to make clear who he is, as well as the expressions on the faces of everyone at the table. He is casting light on the characters present.

Just as it is difficult to tell who is Matthew, the same dual interpretation is present in today's gospel. Until I read Morgan's post, I had never considered that this passage could be read two ways. Here is where we get to today's English lesson.

"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." I have always assumed that the word "light" is an adjective in this sentence. Jesus is describing the weight of his burden, right?



But what if Jesus is using the word "light" as a noun? His burden is light. His purpose is sharing that light with the world. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says that he is the light of the world. If we back up one sentence in this passage of Matthew, we find that we, too, are invited to accept that burden.

"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." Just as there is contrast in the painting we inspected, there is the contrast of light and dark all around us.

You have been invited. What are you going to do about this invitation from Jesus? Are you willing to accept it? How do you go about being a light in this world? I think you know some answers to that question. You donate to the food pantry. You assist neighbors and family. You live your faith through kindness and love to all your neighbors. You are a good citizen. You know how to do this.

I think you will find that as you share your light, others will pass that light on to even more folks who need a ray of light in their lives. No one questions the need for light in our world right now.

YOU -- be the light!! Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with silent personal prayer. God of light, shed your light on us so that we may be a reflection of you. We are your hands and feet in this world. As such, let us carry your light to

others. May we also recognize your light in others, igniting a greater beam that reaches into the dark corners of our world.

Healing God, there are so many of us who need to be healed -- those who are physically ill, those who battle inner demons, those who are jobless, friendless, homeless. Guide us to be present for those around us who need your light. Be with those on our prayer list and everyone we know who need your healing touch. Comfort them. Guide their caregivers and professionals to make the best decisions and use their skills to heal.

We have important decisions to be made at the ballot box soon. Let our faith in you guide our decisions. May we always keep the teachings of your son, our savior, in mind when we choose those who will lead us. Be with our current leaders. Let them be a light to the many they serve.

Most of all, Holy God, we thank you for the opportunity to be present at this time, in this place, to serve you. Bless us as we are a blessing to others.

Let us join our voices to pray the prayer your son taught us.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily

bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR GIFTS:

UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

Take and receive these gifts dear God, bless and multiply them that they may show the world your glory, your light, shining through our lives. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

Do not be dismayed by the brokenness in the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intentions. So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you. (L.R. Knost)



PRAYER LIST: Rich Schmitt, Nelson Libell, Dave Seneczyn, Eric White, Lori Riess, Charles Chamberlin, Donna Isselhard, Mitch Nallie, Candy Peace, Greg Talley, Carol Meyer, Leah Williams, Pat Holtgrave, Jane Riess, Shari Hamilton, Charlotte Watson, Becky Ballard.