

Being childish!

Janice Scott *reflects on* Matthew 11:16-19. 25-end

Jesus is good with children because he loves them and they instinctively respond to him. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, he often uses children to illustrate his point. In last week's passage he said that even something as simple as handing a cup of water to one of the little ones would bring its own rewards. Today Jesus shows that he is well aware of children's not-so-appealing behaviour, when he compares his generation to a bunch of playmates whining and reproaching each other. They are never satisfied. John the Baptist was frugal and fiery and critics denigrated him. Jesus was very different to John, but they denounced him too.

Despite the fact that children sometimes behave badly, Jesus thanks God for revealing things to infants, rather than to those who are wise or intelligent. Perhaps it is something to do with having a mind that's open, rather than one cluttered with worldly knowledge. Again, Jesus identifies with God, and goes on to welcome everyone.

By suggesting that those who are weary and over-burdened should take his yoke upon them, Jesus is offering not just a hierarchical relationship, but a partnership. Yoked oxen work together as a team. When we work with Jesus in his team, following his ways, our burdens become light and we experience the peace and rest that passes all understanding. ☺



Ever-welcoming God, when burdens are heavy it is difficult to think of anything else. Help us to bring all our problems to you, lay them at your feet, and then work with you in the way that you lead us. Amen.

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis

by Jane Williams

Jane Williams continues her series about this great Christian classic.

Lewis looks at virtues and vices, and argues that morality is not so much about trying to do good in order to please God, as about shaping who we are. Each decision and action makes tiny adjustments to the kind of person we are becoming, "slowly turning [us] into a heavenly creature or a hellish creature". That is why our behaviour is so important – its consequences are enormous, not just for others, but for ourselves.

Lewis argues that the greatest sin is pride, or self-conceit, because it is, by definition, competitive rather than co-operative. He offers a simple test – how much do we hate it when other people snub us or overlook us, patronise us, hog the limelight, or put us in the wrong? And how do we then feel about that person?

Genuine humility is not putting ourselves down. Instead, it is a joyful and liberating freedom from having to think about ourselves the whole time, and worry about what others are thinking. Humility is freedom. ☺

The music of Ordinary Time

Part 2 – celebrating the season

by Heather Smith

The liturgical colour of Ordinary Time is green, reminding us of the fruitful earth. Now is a time to think about creation in all its glory, to give thanks for it and resolve to look after it.

A look through a book of hymns or choral anthems turns up familiar hymns: "All Things Bright and Beautiful" and "For the Beauty of the Earth", have been set by John Rutter, a prolific contemporary composer. Search a little further, though, and there is much more.

For example, Paul Winter and others wrote "Missa Gaia" ("Earth Mass"), in which the calls of wolves, whales and other animals feature. Taizé' and Iona also have much to offer. John Bell's hymn, "Praise with Joy the World's Creator", speaks of God's continued creative presence in the world.

For traditionalists, there is Haydn's "The Heavens are Telling" from "The Creation", a setting of Psalm 19. It links the glory of God's creation with the glory of God's law, suggesting that one does not stand without the other, reminding us that all creation points us towards God. ☺

“If you could see humanity spread out in time, as God sees it, it would look like one single growing thing – rather like a very complicated tree. Every individual would appear connected with every other.”

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), writer and theologian