

*Matthew 11.15-30*  
*14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A*  
*5<sup>th</sup> July 2026*

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Jesus declares “to what will I compare this generation?”;

I know right??? kids these days. “Sitting in the market-places and calling to one another”.

What else have we got?

“John (the Baptist) came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”; (I) came eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a drunkard!” What do you want? Jesus says.

In order to see the message here, we need to understand the types of people who had been confronting Jesus, and who Jesus’ words were in response to.

We remember, of course, that the Jewish peoples were living in land occupied by the Romans. And the Greek culture and language, (remember that Greek was the common language of the Roman empire, not Latin) was having a huge influence.

Consequently, some groups of the Jewish people were very concerned with maintaining their own cultural identity, and so were very caught up in what it meant to be Jewish. One of these groups was the Pharisees, who were invested in following the Jewish rules – especially the external rules that set the Jewish people apart from gentiles.

These rules are from the Law of Moses, which is found in the Torah – the first five books of the Bible. The most famous rules from these books are The Ten Commandments. But in fact, there are 613 rules in these books, known as the Mitzvot: there are 248 positive rules; instances where it is said TO do something, and 365 negative rules; instances where it is said NOT to do something.

Overtime, rabbis tried to clarify these rules, explaining how they ought to be applied in different situations. So they made “fence rules” – rules that acted like a fence to prevent you even coming close to breaking one of the Biblical rules. These extra rules and teachings became known as the Oral Law, and by Jesus’ time it included over 1500 rules to add to those 613 written rules in the Torah. These rules were meant to make things clearer for people, but over time it actually made it more complicated, more legalistic, and hampered a person’s ability to use

their own discernment in different situations. (We all know what that's like). And new rules were being added all the time as new situations and applications arose.

Let's take, for example, the law not to work on the Sabbath. Firstly they needed to figure out what exactly counted as work! And so 39 categories were created to describe work, and within those were numerous sub-categories. Let me read some of the rules to you:

On the Sabbath, the limit for travel was 3,000 feet from one's house; but... various exceptions were provided, because if you had placed some food within 3,000 feet of your house (to keep it in a cool place for example), you could go there to eat it;

and because food is considered an extension of the house, you could then go another 3,000 feet beyond the food...

Let's do another one.

Under Sabbath regulations, a Jew cannot not carry a load heavier than a dried fig; but if an object weighed half that amount, he could carry it twice...

Throwing an object into the air with one hand and catching it with the other was prohibited...

Baths could not be taken because some of the water might spill out onto the floor and "wash" it.

Chairs could not be moved because dragging them might make a furrow in the ground, and ploughing is, of course, work.

A woman is not to look in a mirror lest she see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out. That's work.

You can carry ink enough to draw a maximum of two letters of the alphabet.

If your house is burning down on a Sabbath day, you are not allowed to carry your clothes out of it. However, you can put on several layers of clothes as the house is burning down, because then you are wearing them instead of carrying them.

However, false teeth are not considered clothes, so you can't wear those on a Sabbath day, because they exceeded the weight limit of a dried fig.

This is the terrible result of when people are unable to live with ambiguity. Everything becomes regulated and legalistic, and it breeds a spirit of judgement on each other.

And we see Jesus responding to this in his words: “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!’”

Jesus, and John the Baptist, conducted themselves in opposite ways, but neither was the “right” way, apparently. Because the “right” way had become too limited. Even the Pharisees couldn’t keep to it –Jesus frequently pointed out their hypocrisy. The Law had become a burden too heavy to bear. As Jesus will say of the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23: “They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others”. *[Matt. 23:4]*.

And then Jesus prays: “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.”

It is not the wise and the learned who understand God’s wisdom, but infants – that is, those who have never had the time to learn these rules, and yet, they are still perfectly innocent.

“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.”

Jesus implies that it is not through following the many rules that we know God, but through ‘The Son’. God is not a rule book; God is relational. When Jesus says, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father”. We may think this means God has ‘handed over’ something for Jesus to have power over, like ‘handing over’ a company, or a prisoner, or ‘handing over’ the reins. But that is not what is happening here.

This it is actually referring to the passing on of tradition. Jesus is not receiving his tradition from his ancestors, but from God himself, just as Moses received the commandments directly from God. Jesus doesn’t need to try to interpret the Torah to guess at what God wants. Jesus is speaking with authority, directly from God.

And that brings us to this often-quoted line.

“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.”

Beautiful poetry!

The rabbis spoke of ‘the yoke of the law’, and of a disciple as one who ‘put his neck in the yoke’. So here, Jesus’ reference to a yoke is an explicit reference to the Law. It is another indication that Jesus is ‘the new Moses’, bringing a *new* law.

And Jesus’ law is not difficult and overly complex, like the law of the Pharisees. Jesus’ law is the Law of Love. We hear it numerous times:

In John we hear Jesus say, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” *[John 13:35]*

In Romans, Paul says, “the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” *[Romans 13.8]*

And of course, in Matthew, Jesus says, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” *[Matt. 22:36]*

When we make love our law, we don’t need thousands of rules to help us apply it. We can discern how to apply it. But we still have to *remember* to apply it, we still have to be disciples as well. “Take my yoke upon you,” Jesus said, “and learn from me.”