

**Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor...**

**Guest Preacher-Joy Gilbert**

***Isa 40:27-31; Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30 Third Sunday after Pentecost -  
June 30, 2013***

This week we celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup>, Independence Day. One of the greatest symbol that America has which speaks to our independence and the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is the Statue of Liberty. It is one of the best loved and most enduring symbols of our country and our highest ideals.

As you know, the French wanted to give the United States a memorable gift, an expression of the two nations' friendship, in honor of our centennial in 1876, but things got a little bogged down and the Statue of Liberty wasn't officially dedicated until Oct. 1886, 10 years later.

The statue is of a woman, derived from *Libertas*, ancient Rome's goddess of freedom from slavery, oppression, and tyranny. Her raised right foot is on the move, not standing still. Her torch signifies enlightenment.

The tablet in Lady Liberty's hand represents knowledge and shows the date of the United States Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776. We all know those familiar opening words of the Declaration....

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*

Engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty are some other familiar words. It is Emma Lazarus's poem entitled "The New Colossus." None of our nation's founders ever saw the Statue of Liberty or heard Lazarus' defining poem, of course, but I think most of us would agree that the spirit of the poem goes hand in hand with what Jefferson was trying to capture in the Declaration of Independence that has inspired so many around the world.

Have you ever read the full text of Emma Lazarus's poem? I must confess that while the last stanza is familiar, the first part was not. Here it is in its entirety:

***The New Colossus***

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.*

*"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

Back in the 1880s, waves of immigrants found their way here and literally helped to build America—

- the roads,
- the railroads,
- the high-rise buildings,
- the subway tunnels,
- the bridges,
- the infra-structure.

The prejudice and cruelty that they often encountered after arriving are well-documented. Conflict was inevitable—they competed for jobs. Their culture and religion were often different than the mainstream in this country at that time. Their sheer numbers added stress to housing, sanitation, food and water systems.

But eventually most of them won a place in this society that ensured the health, safety and survival of their families. And they made our nation stronger.

Emma Lazarus, who wrote the poem, was the daughter of a wealthy Jewish family living in New York City. Although moving in elevated social circles, she became aware of the thousands of Jewish refugees arriving in New York, escaping from the waves of vicious anti-Semitism that were sweeping Europe during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

There were far more than could possibly be absorbed by the city, and they were located in various miserable housing stations that offered very little to their exhausted and starving occupants. Emma involved herself, doing what she could to alleviate their suffering. Her famous sonnet came into being as part of a collection of writings, published in 1883, that was successfully sold to raise money for the installation of the Statue of Liberty.

*“Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she  
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”*

I couldn't help but think of these words this 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend as I read Jesus' invitation in our scripture today:

*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.*

Just as Emma Lazarus, in her poem, was rejecting the goddess of power and storied pomp for one who would welcome:

- the tired,
- the poor,
- the huddled masses,
- the homeless...

Jesus, in this passage, is rebuking:

- the powerful,
- the wise,
- the intelligent ones,
- the leaders of the Pharisees, the religious establishment.

Instead he is focusing his attention and promise of help on what he calls the “infants,” those who are far from the places of power and influence.

Most of us spend our lives seeking wisdom and intelligence, and now it seems that those are the very attributes Jesus dismisses. In fact, Jesus says that the blessings of God are intentionally hidden from those who are filled with the wisdom and intelligence of this world.

Instead it is:

- the infants of this world,
- the innocent and naïve,
- the tired,
- the poor,
- the huddled masses,
- the weary and heavy burdened—

It is the infants of this world—the innocent and naïve—who somehow best understand the ways of God. Jesus’ promise was to such as these, people that we experience in the mission field, in Africa and other wonderful countries around the world.

Our Mission & Service Committee’s World Mission Dispatch, found in our monthly newsletter, is focusing on Peru in the current issue. But we are also serving a mission field right here in Jackson County with the food pantry and other local projects:

*Jesus said, “I thank you, Father..., because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants....*

{selah}

*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.*

There are two basic kinds of yokes that can be used to bear burdens: single ones and shared ones. A shared yoke requires two creatures, but if they are a well-matched pair they can work all day, because under a shared yoke one can rest a little while the other pulls.

They can take turns bearing the brunt of the load; the stronger one can cover for the weaker one without ever laying down their burden because their yoke is a shared one. They have company all day long, and they may get tired, but not totally exhausted, because they are a team.

Plenty of us labor under the illusion that our yokes are single ones; that we have to go it alone, that the only way to please God is to load ourselves and others down with heavy requirements—

- good deeds,
- pure thoughts,
- blameless lives,
- perfect obedience,

All those rules we make and break, all those burdens we put on ourselves and on each other, while all the time Jesus is standing right there in front of us,

- half a shared yoke across his own shoulders,
- the other half wide open and waiting for us,
- a yoke that requires no more than that we simply step into it and share the burden with Jesus.

### **Share the burden with Jesus.**

(vv. 25-30). Why did the religious leaders rebel against John and Jesus? Because they (the leaders) were intellectually and spiritually proud and would not become little babes in humility and honesty. There is a vast difference between the spoiled children of the parable (Matt 11:16-19) and the submissive children of this statement of praise. The Father reveals Himself to the Son, and the Son reveals Himself and the Father to those who are willing to come to the Son in faith. These verses indicate both the sovereignty of the Father and the responsibility of the sinner. Three commands summarize this invitation.

**"Come."** The Pharisees all said "Do!" and tried to make the people follow Moses and the traditions. But true salvation is found only in a Person, Jesus Christ. To come to Him means to trust Him. This invitation is open to those who are exhausted and burdened down.

**"Take."** This is a deeper experience. When we come to Christ by faith, He gives us rest. When we take His yoke and learn, we find rest; that deeper rest of surrender and obedience. The first is "Peace with God" (Rom 5:1); the second is "the peace of God" (Phil 4:6-8). To "take a yoke" in that day meant to become a disciple. When we submit to Christ, we are yoked to Him. The word "easy" means "well-fitting"; He has just the yoke that is tailor-made for our lives and needs. The burden of doing His will is not a heavy one (1 John 5:3).

**"Learn."** The first two commands represent a crisis as we come and yield to Christ, but this step is into a process. As we learn more about Him, we find a deeper peace, because we trust Him more. Life is simplified and unified around the person of Christ. This invitation is for "all":

*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*

It's no wonder those words are so well known and speak so deeply to our hearts. They remind us, as I need to be reminded from time to time, and as I'm sure you need to be reminded from time to time, that those who please God are not those who:

- can carry the heaviest load alone or
- offer the most impressive obedience.

Those who please God are the ones:

- who share their loads,
- who are willing to share their yokes by entering into a relationship with the one whose invitation stands open, whose arms are always open:

*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.*