

# you're doing it wrong

AUG 25  
9:30AM

Sunday, August 25, 2024  
“You’re Doing It Wrong” | Matthew 11:28-30 | Brenda Moten

Before I start the sermon for today, I am going to unapologetically age myself, by sharing a line from a movie that was released on July 22, 1983; 41 years ago. The movie was Mr. Mom starring Michael Keaton and Teri Garr<sup>i</sup>. For you who may not be familiar with the movie, it’s based upon a true story, that appeared in the National Lampoon magazine about the tribulations of the writer, John Hughes, taking care of his children while his wife was away.<sup>ii</sup>

- The setting – A Detroit Suburb
- Dad, Jack, played by Micheal Keaton, and his friends Larry and Stan
  - Lost their engineering jobs at the Ford Motor Company (you know how corporate reorganization sometimes works)
  - Jack has trouble finding another job (over-qualified, under-qualified, not qualified, ageism)
- Mom, Caroline, played by Teri Garr, having been a housewife for years,
  - Decides this is a great time to resume her career in advertising
  - She lands her dream job in her first interview.
  - That leaves Jack, to fulfill Caroline’s role in the home. Jack become Mr. Mom and Caroline is... well...Mom.

As can be imagined, Jack faced some challenges on his first day in his new role, with the 3 children - 2 boys (7-year-old Alex, 5-year-old Kenny) and 6-month-old daughter, Megan. After the breakfast fiasco (watch the movie), it was time for school drop-off for the 7-year-old Alex.

Jack was fairly confident he could school drop-off. How hard could be, right? You drive up to the front of the school, tell the kid to get out, and you drive off. On this particular morning, Jack was running late, it was raining, and the two youngest kids were in the backseat . . . being kids. Just as Jack turns to get in the line for drop off, the

other drivers are honking their horns. Jack, infuriated, says “Why is everyone honking their horns, . . . , the kids say “Dad, you’re doing it wrong. Mom doesn’t do it like this.” If that wasn’t enough, a very irate mother shouted out her window “South to drop-off you \_\_\_\_\_”. You get the idea.

That was 41 years ago. Today, it is estimated that 1.4 million men are stay-at-home dads, and 7 million men are their children's primary caregiver. What is commonplace now was a novelty back then.<sup>iii</sup>

But, that line from that movie has stayed with me and causes me to check myself. A verse that I pray every morning is Psalm 139: 23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” . . . and many times, I have sensed the voice of Go saying “Brenda, you’re doing it wrong”.

The text for this morning comes from the gospel of St. Matthew chapter 11, the verses of focus are 28 -30. The title of the sermon this morning is “You’re doing it wrong”. Now hear again, the word of the Lord, I’ll be reading from King James Version, because some things just sound better in the King James.

*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and  
ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

**The word of God for the children of God. Bless be to God.**

### **Pray with me saints**

*Holy God who loves and nourishes us as a Father and a mother. Fill this place with your Spirit. Hold over MY being absolute sway. May your people hear only YOU speaking through me. AMEN.*

The background for this text starts in Matthew 10 where Jesus called his disciples together to give them an assignment. The assignment was to spread the Goodnews “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” They were to go to the people of Israel only. **NOT to the Gentiles or the Samaritans.**

During their history, Israel had been exiled and subjects of various kingdoms; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia/Media, Greece and within the context for today’s sermon they were subject to the oppressive rule of the Roman empire.<sup>iv</sup> *So, to hear that the*

*Kingdom of heaven was near, at hand. . . where there would be no more oppression was good news, very good news, . . . mighty good news for Israel.*

Before sending the disciples out on assignment Jesus prepared them. He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Also - power, courage, and confidence to proclaim the **Good News – the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

There is a message in that assignment for us today. **When God gives you/me/us an assignment God will prepare us, equip us to do it.** Philippians 2:13 says “For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him, and then helping you do what he wants.” Remember when Moses doubts his ability as a public speaker? God sends Aaron to speak on his behalf.”

Often, God will prepare you before he calls you. That has been the story of my life. *And that, my friends, is a sermon for another time.*

When Jesus finished giving this assignment to his disciples, he went off preaching in the cities where the disciples were scheduled to go.

Scripture sites 3 cities around the Sea of Galilee where Jesus visited; Chorazin (Coh - ray-zin), Bethsaida (beth·say·uh·duh, and Capernaum - according to my research these were prosperous cities whose residents were well versed in the Law of Moses. As I put myself in this scripture, I see those cities as if they are towns and villages like those in the Hamptons or Martha’s Vineyard– luxury waterfront homes - luxurious seaside destinations, homes of the rich and famous.

After preaching and performing miracles in these cities – theologians refer to them as the Evangelical Triangle – Jesus and his message of repentance were rejected by these people.

In my spiritual imagination these people were prideful, boasted of being self-made, having pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps, believe themselves to be self-sufficient, without help from family, government, community or inheritance. They believed themselves wise concerning the law, perhaps by virtue of familial connection with a religious ruler – similar to having a relative teaching at MIT. People who take a relentless individualistic stance so much so that they believe poverty is self-inflicted.<sup>v</sup> They say, “the poor should just pull themselves up by their own bootstraps,

not realizing that these folk don't have boots and those who do, the straps have worn off from endless pulling."

It seems that in that moment, Jesus had given up on them. He said to the people in those cities, ". . . if the marvelous miracles I did in your cities had been done in Sodom, it would still be here today. Truly, Sodom will be better off at the Judgment Day than you. And Jesus prayed this prayer: "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding the truth from those who think themselves so wise, and for revealing it to little children." (Matthew 11:24 – 26).

Perhaps these people were like some today who say, "I think if I do something wrong, I just try and make it right. I don't bring God into that picture".

Perhaps they went through the motions, kind of like CETF **churchgoers**, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and an occasional funeral or memorial service. Maybe they were like cultural Christians of today. Richard Dawkins (an atheist) said, "I call myself a cultural Christian. I'm not a believer, but there's a distinction between being a believing Christian and being a cultural Christian. ... I love hymns and Christmas carols, and I sort of feel at home in the Christian ethos (E-Tho-s)... We [in the U.K.] are a "Christian country" in that sense."

But Jesus had compassion on the "children" the "lost sheep" of Israel. Those who were trying to do it right. His compassion was shone in his invitation. The New Living Translation puts it like this.

"Come to me and I will give you rest—all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. Wear my yoke—for it fits perfectly—and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens."

I was taught to imagine this yoke, the double yoke, that teetered two oxen together to pull a load. In that view Jesus wore the yoke on one side, and the believer wore the yoke on the other. The message being Jesus helps us bear our heavy loads. And that message is true.

However, as I studied this passage this time around, I sensed that a more appropriate visual for this story is the shoulder yoke. Where an individual would put a rod or stick across their shoulders and hang buckets or some type of container to hold the load. This allows for balanced distribution of the load, hands to be free, and encouraged

upright posture.

These people that Jesus had compassion for, were doing their best to follow the laws of Moses were complying with the demands of the tax-collectors - collecting taxes required by the Roman authorities plus an extra for themselves AND. These people, for the most part, were not wealthy and had many concerns . . . getting the animals for sacrifice, temple taxes, and if they had land and could not pay their taxes to Rome, their land could be seized. And then there was every-day living job, food, shelter, clothes, transportation (had to have a mule to ride on and sandals on their feet) paying the bills, taking care of the family, staying safe, dealing with family problems and even neighbors... you know, just like the things we go through every day.

When Jesus spoke of the yoke, his audience understood him. At that time, they talked about the “yoke of the Pharisees”. A system of works that the Pharisees laid on the backs of the people. A burdensome system of self-righteousness and legalistic law-keeping. Biblical scholars suggest the Pharisees had added over **600 regulations regarding what qualified as “working” on the Sabbath**. That is a heavy yoke!

These people, the children or lost sheep of Israel, had been trying to gain the approval of God, to obtain their salvation, escape from a system of oppression, find rest. Jesus’ message was this **You’re doing it wrong**. Any kind of law-keeping is burdensome and amounts to a “heavy yoke” of oppression because no amount of law-keeping can bridge the gap between our sinfulness and God’s holiness.

The invitees are clearly stated in this invitation – “all who labor and are heavy laden.” Those who were trying to do it right.

The invitation is for REST. They can have it - not by pulling oneself up by one’s own bootstraps, or in one’s self-sufficiency. It is premised on one taking Jesus’ YOKE and learning about and from HIM. Then one is in position to receive the **rest Jesus offers**. This invitation comes without an RSVP. The scripture says just to **Come unto me**. Though it may present differently based upon our lived experiences, I believe we all are struggling to wear this world’s YOKE of

- Intergenerational Trauma
- Social Conditioning
- Systems of Injustice

And because of this yoke we struggle to wear, we are overcome with burdens; as Howard Thurman calls them, the three hounds of hell.

- Fear
- Hypocrisy
- Hatred

Which presents as racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, classism, ableism, transphobia, **islamophobia, antisemitism, colorism, and all manner of institutionalized isms.**

I share this message, Matthew 11:29-30, not because I read it and it sounded good, but because I tried it and know that this invitation is legit. Yet for me, it continues to be a process to get to that rest Jesus invites us to. There are some basic things I had to come to grips with before even starting the process. Much like the 12-step program.

- I had to acknowledge that I was powerless over the yoke I was struggling to wear - which felt more like a tree trunk rather than a rod across my shoulders - and my life had become unmanageable. I was constantly in fear, sick (I've got all kinds of autoimmune diseases y'all), depressed, and overflowing with anxiety.
- Came to understand God would restore my sanity (because trying to get through life carrying the hounds of hell was just insane).
- Made a decision to accept Jesus' invitation for rest and take his YOKE.

And, though I am not there yet, I have started the process, I am on the journey and know what it takes to continue.

According to the gospel of Luke Jesus said "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." The yoke of Jesus is LOVE.

1 John 5:3 says "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome"

If you have grown weary carrying the yoke of this world, of endless rules, regulations,

expectations and works in an effort to please God, church folk, or earn your salvation . . . if you are trying to bear the burdens of everyday living without repentance and LOVE – the yoke of Jesus - perhaps **you too are doing it wrong.**

I challenge you to consider the yoke you are struggling to wear today and the burdens you bear because of that yoke. **I challenge you to** decide to exchange that yoke of oppression, for the yoke of liberation that Jesus offers – YOKE of repentance and Love - accept the invitation today.

“Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy-laden. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. You will find rest for your soul. **“The Grass Withers, The Flowers Fades, But the Word of Our Lord Endures Forever”** .

Let’s pray, saints.

*Dear God, we are exhausted under the weight of the yoke of this world - Intergenerational Trauma, Social Conditioning and Systems of Injustice. Starting today, we accept your invitation of rest and exchange this world’s yoke – of oppression, for the yoke of Jesus – a yoke of liberation – the yoke of repentance and Love. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.*

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0085970/>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr.\\_Mom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Mom)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.floridatoday.com/story/life/wellness/2019/02/26/mr-mom-movie/2989965002/>

<sup>iv</sup> [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3671017/jewish/Discover-the-Four-Exiles-of-the-Jewish-People.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3671017/jewish/Discover-the-Four-Exiles-of-the-Jewish-People.htm)

<sup>v</sup> <https://time.com/6261476/bootstrapping-myth-new-american-dream/>