

YOKED WITH CHRIST

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matt. 11:29,30

REFLECTION

As we celebrate the Chinese New Year and enter into the "Year of the Ox" many people would adhere to certain Chinese cultural beliefs and practices that advocate association with and avoidance of certain colours, numbers, materials and even people born under certain zodiac signs so as to experience a smooth and prosperous year. How should Chinese Christians respond to such views and practices? We don't have to subscribe to them because we believe that God is the creator of all things and sovereign over every circumstances in our lives. Nevertheless, we can discover what the Bible has to tell us about the ox, for it does make references to certain animals and encourages us to observe and gain some helpful pointers from such animals (Prov. 6:6, 30:25-28).

The Bible tells us that the Ox/Oxen are hardworking creatures used in the agrarian society during Bible times. In the Old Testament times, some farmers would yoke pairs of oxen so as to produce effective work (1Kings19:19). In other situations, selected ones are used as means of sacrificial offering in worship (Num.19:1). In the New Testament Jesus used the analogy of oxen yoking together to encourage believers to find rest in Him by being yoked with Him (Matt.11:29).

Thus, there is much to discover and reflect on the nature, work and significance of the ox and to draw spiritual lessons for our own faith and relationship with God. Here are some pointers to begin with.

- What are some of your gifts, skills, sphere of influence and calling? How can you use these things to serve God such that they are pleasing sacrifices and worship to Him?
- Where are you in your faith journey? Do you need a mentor to be "yoked" with or can you come alongside someone who needs "yoke" assistance? Are you willing to be "yoked"?
- How would you respond to Jesus' invitation to be "yoked" with Him? What would that mean for you? In yoking with Jesus, what do you think He would want to work on - humility, compassion, love, trust, etc.? Are you willing to submit to His leading?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, It is not easy to follow when things are not on our terms. Yet, You have called us to follow after Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us the grace and humility to be yoked with Jesus in all circumstances, through joy, sorrow, pain, quietness, etc. that we may learn from Him and be like Him in every way. Amen.

SUPPLICATION

- Thank God for your call to salvation. This call is not just a call to eternal life, but also a call to worship and serve the eternal God. Ask God for a genuine heart of worship and a deep desire to serve Him with all that you are and all that you have. Ask Him to show you where and how you can do that.
- Yoking with Christ can be a challenging thing for some because it involves surrendering and following after Him. Ask God to grant you a spirit of humility and grace that allows the Holy Spirit to have His way in moulding you to be more like Christ. Pray to God for the churches in Singapore to be intentional in their mission to be disciple-makers of Jesus Christ. Pray for every believer's faith journey with Christ that as Christ calls and invites each person to a deeper fellowship with Him He would find them willing to do so.
- Pray for the Church leaders and members who have been faithfully serving God. Sometimes, it can be tiring and discouraging. Pray that God would grant them strength, grace and encouragement so that they may serve with joy and gladness of hearts. Pray for more people to step up and be willing to serve God in various capacities in the church and in the marketplaces.
- Pray for the families that will be celebrating Chinese New Year in coming days. May there be restoration of broken relationships, renewal of hearts and minds, and reenergizing of lives as people gather even under restricted conditions.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Col.3:23,24

If you need any prayer or pastoral care support, kindly contact the pastoral care team via:

Email: wecare@brmc.org.sg

Contact: 6592 4011 or 6592 4012