

Lenten Season 2020 – Woke, Yoked and Broke

Matthew 11:16-19, 26-30

To what can I compare this generation? It is like children playing a game in the public square. They complain to their friends, 17 'We played wedding songs, and you didn't dance, so we played funeral songs, and you didn't mourn.' 8 For John didn't spend his time eating and drinking, and you say, 'He's possessed by a demon.' 19 I, on the other hand, feast and drink, and you say, 'He's a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!' But wisdom is shown to be right by its results."

25 At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike.

26 Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way! 27 "My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." 28 Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

I read this passage from Matthew's gospel a while back in prep for this year's Lenten season. The words just jumped off the page and into my spirit and

immediately my mind was tagged with the phrase “Woke, Yoked and Broke.” Ok, how does this connect with the essential themes for Lent? Reflection, repentance, preparation and don’t forget some form of fasting or abstaining from stuff you like – right? But the phrase didn’t leave me, and I am sure it wasn’t just because I thought it was memorable messaging. As I prayed through the words “woke, yoked and broke” the Holy Spirit revealed the connections that I kind of suspected were there all along. Here is the “reveal” that turned on the lights for me with this whole thing.

No more excuses – it’s time to be spiritually WOKE. WOKE as in enlightened and aware. WOKE as in watching and praying. WOKE as in no more being too clueless, too careless, too cautious, and too irrelevant to respond to the darkness and death of our day. Time to be awake, aware, wise and willing enough to engage in what God is doing in real-time. I’m guessing it will take more than one-hour to get WOKE.

YOKED. This one comes with a price tag, but it’s got to come. Time to be attached and accountable – not just to a friend who tells us in those spiritually correct tones the things we already know about ourselves. That’s ok – but, this is not that. This YOKED is actually more like the gut-wrenching conviction of being attached and accountable **to the God of our calling**. This time is not about how much He loves us – it’s about how much we love Him. This YOKED is more like finding the strength and commitment to get under the weight and embrace the grind where what is happening is happening in **the real**. YOKED to the good of it and the bad it – always harder before it gets any easier. YOKED is His way.

And then there is... BROKE. To start, we have to know going in that no one have the WOKE and YOKED mentality with Christ, and not be BROKE. Without BROKE there is no engine to power this whole thing. Without BROKE there is no way to call-out, clear-out and clean-out the "fake news" of who we are and what we do with what we have been given. I know this sounds good but looks bad, but without BROKE there is no Hope. BROKE is good - we need BROKE.

So, there it is. Lenten season 2020. You might be asking, Hey Steve, I hear you on this, but you better "check yourself" first. Yeah, true-that. But that's how this started - me checking myself in front of God and then Him saying... Really Steve? And when I finally said yes, it felt like I was run over by a Tesla - because I never heard it coming. I survived - but just enough to be WOKE, YOKED and BROKE.

steve isaac

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3.8.20

Woke - Yoked - Broke - Lenten Season 2020

[woke opener]

No more being a "lamer." It's time to be SPIRITUALLY WOKE. WOKE as in enlightened and aware to the presence and purpose of God. WOKE as in watching and praying. WOKE as in no more being too clueless, too careless, too cautious, and too irrelevant to engage myself in the process of bringing life and light to the death and darkness of the day. Time to be awake, aware, wise and willing to re-engage in what God is doing in the moment. I'm guessing Jesus knew it would take more than one-hour of prayer in a garden to get WOKE.

[woke defined];

"woke" is the past tense of the verb "to wake" and a dialectal variant of the adjective "awake" as in, someone who is past the process of waking up. They're done with it. They've moved on. They've evolved from, you know, being asleep and hitting the snooze button 15 times. In pop culture, woke is used metaphorically as a more direct version of "to have one's eyes open(ed)", which itself is a metaphorical expression; being aware of or enlightened to - knowing what's going on in the community; social injustice, prejudice, racism, religion, having a grasp of the attitude and mood of the people and their times.

[woke - modern origins];

The cultural and social origins of the word "woke" are from a brilliant but little known author and cultural insider named William Melvin Kelley. Kelley has been described as an cultural influencer and an integral black voice who was ahead of his time. Kelley was certainly "woke" to the attitude and mood of the African American people and their well warranted plight. He is credited with being the modern-day originator of the term "woke" as early as 1962, in an essay called "If You're Woke You, You Dig It" published by the New York Times.

Psalm 73 - song of the musician Asaph

Surely God is good to His people, to those who are pure in heart.

2 But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. 3 For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. 5 They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. 6 Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. 7 From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits. 8 They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression. 9 Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. 10 Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. 11 They say, "How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?" 12 This is what the wicked are like - always free of care, they go on amassing wealth. 13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. 14 All day long I have been afflicted,

and every morning brings new punishments. 15 If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children 16 When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply 17 till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. 18 Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. 19 How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! 20 They are like a dream when one awakes; when you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. 21 When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, 22 I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. 23 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. 27 Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. 28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

[psalm 73 - a WOKE narrative]

I know that God is good. God is good to anyone who seeks Him with a pure heart. Even knowing that God is good, I still had a crisis of faith. My struggle had always been with watching people who do not have a pure heart - who do not sincerely seek God and yet they prosper. I would watch as they prospered financially, professionally, and do it all effortlessly in good health. There always seemed to be plenty of happiness and good times. No worries, no troubles just doing what they

do; no limits, no morals no consequences; saying all the right things and yet doing all the wrong things. Even when they did the wrong things for the wrong reasons they always seemed to come out all-right. And then of course I would grind my teeth while they arrogantly wore all that good life, good stuff, good god like a medal on their chest or another trophy on their shelf. It made me sick and made me angry at God. It made me question if He really was all that good? In my envy, bitterness and hate I could not see and could not hear what was really going on. And then, I got woke. His Spirit took me by the hand and led me step by step, exposing my deception and revealing my greatest struggle - ME. His presence was there every moment showing me, teaching me, WHO HE IS and WHAT HE IS REALLY DOING - and WHY HE IS DOING IT. I can't believe I was so blinded and ignorant - it's embarrassing. But now I know, and for the first time I'm woke. There is nothing I want more here or there than HIM. No matter what happens HE is the strength I could not find within myself, and there is nothing better than being in Him and with HIM. So, for anyone who wants to know, anyone who wants to really be WOKE - He is Good, and He alone is God. There is nothing He can't do.

[spiritually WOKE - the wisdom]

Proverbs 2:1-15

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD

and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity 8 guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. 9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path, 10 for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; 11 discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, 12 delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, 13 who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, 14 who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, 15 men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways.

[spiritually WOKE - the Spirit]

John 14:16-17

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

John 14:25-27

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the

world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

John 16:13

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

John 20:21-22

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

[close - the WOKE walk]

My hope and prayer in this Lenten season as we prepare our hearts and re-set our lives around the hope and power of the Resurrection of Christ, and we become fully WOKE to our faith in God, and our journey with Jesus. Do that by spending time over the next 29 days becoming spiritually WOKE! Listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking and revealing truth and new understanding in and over your life.

one - set aside time to be in God's presence

two - listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit

three - read the Word of truth

four - pray for wisdom and strategic insight [spiritually woke]

My guess is by now you have discovered being WOKE goes much deeper than political, social and civil injustice towards a particular race, religion, party or culture. Those issues and concerns are very real and really important, but they are not fully what it means to be WOKE. Sadly, they reflect a fallen humanity. A humanity deeply mired and emotionally wired to its own limited human context. People want to be woke without really being woke - that doesn't work. It is completely impossible to be fully WOKE about the creation, without being fully WOKE to its Creator. To be spiritually WOKE IS to be enlightened and aware to the presence and purpose of God. One must not only believe in God, but be filled with the Spirit of God - seeking first the Kingdom of God. To follow Jesus in both love and obedience - in what we think, say, and do. To surrender ourselves to love what God loves, and value what God values - to be at peace with Who God IS, to trust in What God DOES, and to be ready when He Decides to DO IT. To work the plan... We Die - God Lives - We Live Again. That is as WOKE as you and I will ever get.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god [little g] of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:5-7

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people [woke]; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

3.15.20

Woke Yoked Broke - Lenten Season 2020

...You woke us to delight in Your praise; for You made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in You.

St. Augustine - Confessions

[yoked opener]

It's Time for you and I to be SPIRITUALLY YOKED. Being Spiritually YOKED however, always comes with a price tag - but it's got to come. YOKED means it is time to be attached, tethered and connected, its time to be accountable to the teaching of Jesus - not just to a friend who reminds us in those spiritually correct tones of our flaws - the ones we already know exist. That's all good and certainly ok - but, this YOKED, is not that yoked. This YOKED is a paradox. Why? **Because it is both the gut-wrenching conviction of being tightly attached and fully countable to the God of our calling, yet being at complete peace for the first time in our life because we finally got to the place where we belong.** This way it's not about how much He loves us - it's about how much we love Him. This YOKED is more like finding the strength and resolve to get under the weight and embrace the grind where what is happening is happening in **real-time**. YOKED to the good of it and to the bad it - always harder before it gets any easier. That is why Jesus said come to Me - YOKED is His way. YOKED is His way to give us rest.

[yoked defined]

yoked;

1. a pair of field animals (oxen or mule) joined together by a wooden device for pulling an iron farm plow or heavy-load cart/wagon, usually consisting of a crosspiece with two bow-shaped pieces, enclosing the head and restraining the shoulders of the animal;
2. **to be or become joined, linked, or united together - as in partners, marriage, fellow-journeyman or following a common cause;**
3. very strong, well built, muscular physique;
4. something of weight, concern or circumstance that is regarded as oppressive or burdensome;
5. to be under a frame fitting over the neck and shoulders of a person, for purpose of carrying pails or baskets.
6. to ascribe ones allegiance, obedience or loyalty to a certain teaching philosophy or to a particular teacher/mentor, sage, rabbi, guru etc.

[yoked - biblical context of matthew 11]

Jesus is in and around the city and region of Capernaum, speaking to a mixed crowd of disciples, curious Galileans, local Capernites, and of course as most always a group of Jewish leaders from the Sanhedrin. This exchange truly represents one of the greatest reveals about message and mission of Jesus as He teaches about His purpose place and identity in God's Kingdom and His Presence. To His point, Jesus revealing Himself as THE way to the Kingdom, and as the very Presence of God. Had

I been there in person (not knowing what I know now), probably would've went right over my head as well. But now that we have two thousand years of hindsight, hundreds of thousands of hours in theological study and reasoning, and hundreds of thousands of words in written commentary available we have a good shot at understanding Jesus and the meaning of what He spoke that day. Believe me - this powerful. This will get you YOKED!!

So in "the real" Matthew 11:16-30, goes like this... What can I compare you to? Truth is you don't know what these people need - you only know you want from them. They are worn out and completely crushed under the stress and strain of trying to keep your laws, meet your expectations and feed your corruption. You don't really know anything about the God's Kingdom, or the true glory of His Presence - you haven't for long time. You tell them something different every day, what's wrong with you? These folks trusted you to teach them... but you don't know how to anymore - do you? You knowingly hid the truth from them - and now it's hidden from you. For people like you, that's how it's going to be - that was the Father's idea. I like it. So, from here on, I will invite everyone (literally everyone) who is worn out and crushed by what you are doing, to come to Me. From now on I will teach them My way - the Father's way. They will be YOKED with ME and learn from Me, but they certainly won't be worn out or crushed by it. Even as they are being YOKED, they will find rest in the Father's Presence and find their place in His Kingdom. They don't need you any more - they have Me.

Matthew 11:27-30

I know You have entrusted EVERYTHING to me, and that no one truly knows ME except YOU, and no one truly knows YOU except ME and of

course those that I have planned to reveal You to.” 28 Then Jesus looked at everyone gathered and said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

[one - come to me]

orig-grk; deute pros eme - The invite from Jesus in that moment was to move away from religion of Man and enter into relationship - it's personal - it is God's way. Jesus said, "Come to Me." It is meant to be taken literally... "Aren't you tired? Come over here - be with Me now" He has said this very thing to me. No one can take that away. And now - I'm YOKED to Him forever.

[two - take my yoke upon you]

orig-grk; airo zeugnumi mou epi humas - Take My yoke upon you" here literally means, "to serve as I teach." We are tied, tethered to Jesus. We trust Him and His teaching - not the religion and rebellion of man. We learn from Jesus how to live, love, and lead - we serve. We serve the way He serves - we love the way He loves. By YOKING to Him, we become true disciples of Jesus.

[three - you will find rest]

orig-grk; heurisko anapausis humas - When Jesus said these words he was literally saying, "Yoked to Me, you will discover how to stop oppressive overload and the unnecessary demand." What Jesus knew was this - matter how hard the people tried "The Law" according to the Sanhedrin had become a religion of man and impossible to keep. Find Jesus - find rest - find rest - find rest - find Jesus - find Jesus - find hope. That is YOKED.

[close]

Jesus invites you and I to be YOKED to Him. - "Come to Me, 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," By being YOKED to Christ we discover two things. First, that He has already removed our **burden of sin** - He carried that weight on the cross. And secondly, that he bids us to off-load or download (if you will) our **burden of self**. Self-serve, self-loath, self-taught, self-ish, self-made and self-medicated. We exchange self-stuff for the gentle weight of humility as God's creation and for service to God's kingdom. Being YOKED to Him is both our rest and reward.

YOKED to Christ also means being present in the presence of God. As we are YOKED to Him we see and experience the fullness His glory and the power of His presence. He calls us to Himself He calls us into His presence He calls us into His glory. **There is no presence-power-glory, anymore or anywhere with anyone but in Christ Himself.** That is precisely why He says - COME TO ME - BE YOKED TO

ME. Walk away from what is powerless to save, dead in sin, still living off its former glory. To be YOKED Him is to be YOKED to His active presence - power - and glory. YOKED - we are now the habitation (dwelling place) for the presence and Spirit of God.

3.22.20

Woke Yoked Broke - Lenten Season 2020

[broke context and defined]

broke - broken - brokenness;

- 1. having been fractured or damaged and no longer in one piece or in working order**
- 2. having given up all hope; despairing**
- 3. generally it probably means a person was hurt & just can't get over it;**
- 4. a feeling of emotional brokenness - feeling empty, incapable or unavailable; the idea that something inside a person is broken; a state or condition of brokenness**

[broke opener]

And finally it is the time to be... SPIRITUALLY BROKE. We have to know going in that no one can have that WOKE and YOKED mentality of Jesus, and not be BROKE like Jesus - surrendered to the process. Without BROKE there is no life-force or power to this whole thing. Without BROKE there is no way to call-out the "fake news" of who WE are, and to clean-up the mess of what WE are REALLY doing with what WE have actually been given. Broke is humble not arrogant - Broke is love not hate - Broke is His way not our way. Without BROKE there is no Hope - BROKE is good - we need BROKE.

[broke in reality]

When I wrote these words a little over four weeks ago as the final part to our Lenten season series called WOKE -YOKED - BROKE. Even though then I knew there was real concern for the potential of the COVID-19 Virus, (like most of you) I certainly did not see the exponential spread of the virus and its global power to generate a pandemic fear and visible panic in the hearts and minds of reasonable, capable, logical and intelligent people. I know that some of that fear and panic has been a flame fanned by irresponsible and agenda driven voices. But, we would all be foolish to not acknowledge that a very real adversary and threat exists and it is capable of probably more than we have initially imagined. People are getting sick, and some are not recovering. That is very real and of course should be acknowledged. This disease has broken many hearts, spirits, and the will and life of many - even in our own city. I would say that the BROKE message took on a whole new meaning for our world in the last 10 days. I have no intention this morning to exploit that message, but rather to explain that message so that we can all find the faith, hope and courage to acknowledge the difference between what is real and what is reality. I have just described what is real - now I want to lovingly remind you of what is not only an alternate, but an even greater reality.

As your pastor, and as an extended voice of hope, I also believe it is even more important right now to acknowledge and attach to an alternate and greater reality. Let me explain. Much of what people are feeling is made possible not just because of the existence of a highly contagious and (for a small segment) potentially fatal virus. It is my shared belief with many others, that much of what people are feeling is made possible by the general loss of faith and trust in God. It is easy to doubt and disbelieve in a God that you have decided does not exist, or to blame and despise a

God who may **do or not do** what you want that God to do - that becomes a reality choice. It is easier to make those choices than it is to choose to believe, trust and have faith in God during a global pandemic caused by an unknown and dangerous virus. The alternate and greater reality for those who choose to trust and believe in God is this. We have faith in God, not for what He **does or does not choose to do** - but we have faith in God because of **who He is to us**. That is a greater reality and that is how we then speak of God during times like this. The brilliant theologian, Thomas Oden, called this process "theodicy." Theodicy means... To speak justly of God amid the awesome fact of suffering. I would like for each of one listening and watching today to take a moment and speak to someone using "theodicy." Here is an example; Brent, even though many people are troubled right now - God is my Peace. Can you take a moment and do that? (one minute)

Even while we were speaking to one another, the Holy Spirit gave me a greater reality. **God is my Peace, God is my Hope, God is my Refuge, God is my Love, God is my Provider, God is my Vision, God is my Maker, God is my Strength, God is my Wisdom and God is my Dwelling Place.**

Because He is all of those things and more to me, it is only reasonable that I fully trust in Him no matter what He does or does not do - He is God, and my greater reality is that I have placed all my hope in Him. We are BROKE by the very real circumstances of the COVID-19 virus, and we are humbled before the greatness and gravity of our God, whose love is our greatest reality and whose whose gravity pulls us to Himself. It becomes very comforting to V and I, as we confidently trust God for the health and well-being of our five children and five grandchildren during this time. It is so very comforting in this greater reality to trust God and have

complete faith in Him for our extended family and our community here at Reunion Church. It is important that even though we find ourselves broken by life - to remain humbled by the greater reality of our God. it is important that we speak of God to one another, and to anyone needing hope about who He is, and why really knowing Him allows us to fully trust in Him. What does that look like in a biblical context?

[broke in the biblical context]

psalm 23:1-6

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. 3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. 4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. 5 You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. 6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

psalm 51:10-17

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. 11 Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to

obey you. 13 Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you. 14 Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. 15 Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you. 16 You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

Psalm 147:1-6

Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. 2 The LORD builds up His people; he gathers the outcasts. 3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. 4 He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. 5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. 6 The LORD lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.

[broke in a practical context]

For Practical Discussion –

What Does that Alternate and Greater Reality Look Like?

...when someone we know is afraid and panicking?

...when we are navigating the grocery store?

...as we interact and are seen in public?

...as we "tweet, post, like and share" on social media?

...when someone asks us to pray?

...in moments when we ourselves are weak?