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Gospel lesson

Prior to this passage, John the Baptist had been arrested and thrown in prison, and his disciples were told by Jesus that (rather than starting a rebellion to free John) Jesus was going to continue doing God's work among the people. Jesus then explained John's role to the crowd, which apparently included some disappointed onlookers. That brings us to:



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-teaching/>;
courtesy of Lumo Project Films - www.lumoproject.com

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

NRSV

¹⁶ "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷ 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon';

¹⁹ the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "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;

²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's/Interactive time>

Would someone like a Peppermint Patty?

<Let them respond>



picture from MMMS collection

I have a box full of them here. Can you open it to get one out? <Let them respond/try>

Can you explain the trick to getting it open?

<Let them respond; show them if necessary; pass out candy>

What did you do before getting the box open?

<Let them respond>

When I first got the box, I struggled with it a little. Do you think it would have been easier to get the box open if someone told me how to do it?

<Let them respond>

Do you think it is easy to get along with people?

<Let them respond>

How do we learn to get along with others?

<Let them respond>

Who do you think is the best person to teach us how to get along with others? <Let them respond>

Jesus came to teach us about God's love and how to live with one another in that love. He said to love God first and then to love one another. Do you think that works out better or worse than loving yourself first and chasing material gains instead of relationships? Why? <Let them respond>

I have found that when I love God and other people, we work better together, have more peace and more gifts to share.

You know, after I learned how to open that box, I put it aside for a while. When I finally came back to it, what do you think I did? <Let them respond>

It took me a while to remember what I was supposed to

do; I struggled with it for a little bit. What do you suppose happens if we chase after material gain or focus on hating a particular group for a while?

<Let them respond>

We might find it a struggle getting back into the habit of loving God first and loving all people. Yet, we know that is the better way to live. May we always remember to look to God first and to strive for the wellbeing of all of God's children, no matter what is going on in the world.

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<Hymn "If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee" UMH #142>

Message: Delight in the Law



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/core-faith/week-1-sixth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-1-sixth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-core-faith-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Glorious Lord over all nations,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may receive Your instruction with delight, and in faithfully following Your laws, make Your kingdom more manifest upon this earth. Amen.

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We begin to look at “Core Faith” today with “Delight in the Law.”

“At 250 years, we find ourselves celebrating our nation’s ideals while honestly confronting our failures, discovering - like Paul - that true hope comes not from self-reliance but from being rescued and transformed by Christ.”

One time when my sons were school-age, we stayed at a campground that had a small recreation hall. It had a foosball table and a ping pong table, but no paddles or balls to use with them.

My mother-in-law knew the campground, so she had brought ping pong paddles with a few ping pong balls for us to use, which we happily did. However, kids being kids, the game was a little less than sedate. At first unintentional, rafter shots became a new challenge to the game that I thought I knew.

After playing rafter pong for a while, one of my sons noticed the foosball table and asked if we could play that. *<resume screensharing in Zoom>*



picture of table soccer from
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Table_soccer_\(1341679789\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Table_soccer_(1341679789).jpg);
credit: Sergey Galyonkin from
Raleigh, USA

For anyone who does not know the game, foosball – also called table soccer – involves sliding and spinning rods so that the stiff figures attached to them can knock a weighted ball around toward your opponent’s goal.

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We did not have a weighted ball or instructions, so we tried to make do with a ping pong ball and what seemed like reasonable rules. It worked OK for the most part, and my boys were fast learners, so my younger son was soon beating me – by a lot.

I got particularly frustrated when he used the lightweight nature of the ping pong ball to his advantage (doing aerial shots somehow) while I was trying to play as though using a weighted ball (I did not think shots that bounced above the table multiple times should count). So, I tried to take advantage of the light weight too – by blowing the ball in the direction I wanted it to go.

Both my boys called it out as cheating, and the game went downhill from there (in gales of laughter) as they decided that if I could blow on the ball, they could too. It was the windiest foosball I have ever played.

It would have been a lot easier to play the game if we had the right ball and game rules. Because we took it upon ourselves to work with what we had rather than get the proper things, chaos ensued.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/core-faith/week-1-sixth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-1-sixth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-core-faith-graphics>

Abraham's servant did better at getting a wife for Isaac than I did with getting my sons to play foosball. In those days of arranged marriages, when Abraham determined there was not a suitable option

for a wife for Isaac among the Canaanites, he could have tried to make do with the choices at hand. Instead, he sent his servant to find a proper woman.

The servant not only followed the letter of his master's directions but followed the faithful spirit of Abraham's intent by asking God to help him with his task. God blessed that faithfulness with the perfect partner for Isaac, a matriarch who had profound influence on the family's outcome.

Far too often, people do things without inviting God in first. Paul wrote about that tendency even in himself, to "do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want" because of sin.

We see that kind of thing in the world today: politicians who pass legislature knowing that it is harmful to citizens, just so they can stay in power; businessmen who disregard environmental impacts so they can make a profit; addicts stealing even from loved ones just to get the next fix; and road rage cropping up when people are anxious to get somewhere.

None of those are healthy, and there are a myriad of smaller things to which we each fall prey daily. We delight in God's law because it holds sinners accountable for what they do, driving us to be better – and yet we still break it and deserve punishment.

Wretched as we are, Jesus Christ our Lord will rescue us. We do not get a free pass to sin; we have to repent – that means stop sinning – and strive to live as Jesus showed us, helping those in need where we

can, fixing broken relationships where we can. Jesus gives us a path forward to new life, away from where we were trapped by wrongdoing (our own or others').

God wants to help us and calls us to better life than we tend to pursue. Jesus described how He and John the Baptist called people in different ways, and those determined to turn away complained about them both. Jesus's "yoke is easy, and [His] burden is light" compared to the problems we create for ourselves. We can delight in His law, to love God and one another, for it underpins everything good.

This week, I invite you to

- ✝ Do an honest assessment of what unhealthy behavior you prioritize over responsibilities or opportunities to show God's love.
- ✝ Look for where you can have better impact.
Ask God to show you!
Perhaps you could call someone, write an affirming note, visit, volunteer, assist your neighbor.
- ✝ Set some time aside - schedule it - to do that better thing this week, even daily if you can.
- ✝ Give God thanks for your successes and ask for help with where you believe you have failed.

The Holy Spirit will work with whatever you do when you dedicate it to God. Delight in God's law of love.