

# His Yoke



Matthew 11:16-30

Year A Proper 9

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## Parts by scene

■ = large part   ▲ = medium sized part   ● = small part

		1	2	3
▲	Jesus	▲	▲	■
▲	Susanna - the more conventionally-minded friend of Joanna, who, like her friend, left her home to become a disciple	●	▲	▲
▲	John - the gentlest and most caring of the disciples	▲	▲	●
▲	Joanna - a wealthy woman with a perceptive and agile intellect who abandons her life as the co-manager of King Herod's household to follow Jesus	▲	▲	▲
▲	Judas - possibly the deepest thinker and best organizer, the one who usually sees the big picture most clearly, and also the disciple with the best sense of humor	▲	▲	●

## Scene 1

Jesus , Joanna , John , Judas , Susanna

*{Jesus and the disciples sit around their campfire.}*

**Jesus**      Well, we've had some good talk, but I think it's time to get to bed. It's been a long day.

**Susanna**    I don't think I've ever walked so far in one day in my life. And that climb right at the end!

**John**        It was worth it, though, to reach this spot.

**Joanna**      The view is incredible. I'm already feeling compassion for the people of the town, seeing them all sleeping in their homes beneath us in the moonlight like this.

**Jesus**        Is everything prepared for tomorrow?

**Judas**        We're all set. We can take a turn at the synagogue of course, but we've also been invited specifically to speak to the crowd in the marketplace, and we'll be dining with several members of the town council. Plus, meetings with various contacts throughout the

day that I think could be useful.

**Susanna** What were the people like?

**John** Very receptive for the most part. Very anxious to hear what the rabbi has to say.

**Joanna** "For the most part"?

**Judas** There's always a little friction when dealing with people. We smoothed it over just fine, and I don't anticipate any problems tomorrow in the town.

**Jesus** What was nature of the friction this time?

*{John and Judas look at each other for a moment, unwilling to talk about the problem.}*

**John** Well, it was just some trickiness organizing the dinner.

**Susanna** Is there anything I can help with?

**Joanna** Susanna is the best dinner party organizer this side of the river Jordan.

**Judas** No, it wasn't that kind of problem.

**Jesus** Then what was it?

**John** Some of the council members just weren't sure if they could make it. That's all.

**Jesus** *[a little annoyed]* If they *could* make it? Or if they *would* make it?

**Judas** Okay: some of them got a little scandalized by the fact you have no problem socializing - their word was "partying" - with tax collectors and fallen women.

**John** But we made it clear that you've come to minister to all of Israel, to everyone who'll invite you to eat with them, and they accepted that.

**Jesus** *[a little angrily]* Unbelievable. And did you warn them that a former tax collector and a woman they'd consider "fallen" would be eating in one of their houses the very next day?

**Judas** Yeah, we made that very clear, and they were okay with it.

**John** It really was just a small misunderstanding. Very understandable.

**Jesus** *[with growing anger]* Oh, I understand it perfectly! It's like the children who sit in the marketplace and expect you to dance when they pipe a happy song or mourn when they sing a dirge. Judas, your former master was as ascetic as they come, and what did people say about him?

**Judas** A lot of them thought he was nuts.

**Jesus** And now the Son of Man comes to them eating and drinking, and what do they say? "He's a glutton and a drunk!" There's no winning!

**Susanna** But John and Judas got it all straightened out, right?

**Jesus** *[still smoldering]* Yes. The dignitaries of the town will hold their noses for one evening and suffer our band of sinners and outcasts to sully their doorways.

**John** It was only a few of them. A very small minority.

**Joanna** *[gently]* They're just afraid. We fear the unknown, and we hate what we fear. It's human nature.

**Jesus** *[exploding into anger again]* Don't tell me about human nature! Human nature will destroy this world! Human nature will send it to Hell! You have no idea what it's going to take to -

**Judas** *[interrupting sharply]* Rabbi!

*{That causes Jesus to snap out of it, and there's a long silence.}*

**John** *[gently]* Rabbi, shouldn't we all be getting to bed?

**Jesus** *[worn out]* Of course. Of course. Joanna, I apologize.

**Joanna** It's all right. Get some sleep. We'll all feel better in the morning.

## Scene 2

Jesus , Joanna , John , Judas , Susanna

*{Late that night, Joanna wakes some of the others.}*

**Joanna** *[in an urgent whisper]* John! Judas! Wake up!

**John**        *[blearily]* What is it? What's wrong?

**Judas**        It's still dark! *[jokingly]* It better be the end of the world!

**Joanna**        *[incoherent with desperation]* Please! Please!

**John**        *[seriously]* I think it *is* the end of the world.

**Judas**        All right, all right, we're coming.

*{They get up and follow her.}*

**Joanna**        Hurry!

**John**        What is it?

**Joanna**        It's the rabbi. I don't think he went to bed at all. He's been up all this time, and now -

*{At that moment, a shout pierces the air.}*

**Jesus**        *[shouting angrily down to the town throughout most of this scene]* Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!

**Judas**        Amazing! He kept himself at a boil all this time.

**John**        He's going to make himself sick!

*{They reach the spot that overlooks the town.}*

**Susanna**      Thank heavens you're here!

**Joanna**        What's he been doing?

**Susanna**      He was pacing back and forth like we found him, just stewing and muttering and arguing with imaginary foes, and he just started yelling as you came up.

**Jesus**        Woe to you! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes!

**John**        Rabbi! Rabbi, it's us.

**Susanna**      He's raving!

**Judas**        No he's not. What he said is actually absolutely true.

**Jesus** Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you! And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No! You will go down to Hell!

**John** This is awful!

**Joanna** He's not going to be in any shape for tomorrow if he doesn't calm down and get some sleep. And even if he makes it into the town for all his engagements, all he'll do is yell at them!

**Judas** That's a good point. We do need him calm - and rested - for tomorrow.

**John** Rabbi, let me take you back to bed. Please!

**Susanna** Rabbi, how about some warm milk? The fire's still smoldering; I'll fix you some!

**Jesus** If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. Truly I tell you: it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you! *[suddenly groans and faints]* Uhhhhh!

**Joanna** Rabbi!

**Susanna** He's fainted!

**Judas** John, help me with him. *[to the women]* Go and get his bed ready.

*{The women exit and Judas and John help Jesus to his feet and begin leading him to bed.}*

**John** Come on, rabbi, right this way.

**Jesus** *[mumbling wearily for the rest of the scene]* Where are we going?

**Judas** To bed. It's time to get some rest.

**Jesus** No rest for the wicked. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

**John** Not if you reach them first with your teaching.

**Jesus** So far to seek, and the paths all dark before my feet.

**Judas** That's how it's going to look at this hour. Things will look better in the morning.

**Jesus**        The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness saw it not.

*{They arrive at Jesus' tent.}*

**John**        Here you go, rabbi. Into the bed.

*{Judas and John get Jesus into his bedroll and close the flap of his tent.}*

**Joanna**      Is he all right?

**Judas**        Just a little punchy from exhaustion.

**Susanna**    *[firmly]* I don't like seeing him this way!

**John**        *[in wonder]* I hate seeing *myself* that way.

**Joanna**      You? Like that? Never!

**John**        Sometimes. In my heart. I don't show it. I don't dare.

**Susanna**    *[scornfully]* And you're right to keep it hidden! A grown man should have more self control.

**Judas**        Maybe. But maybe a Messiah also needs that inner fire. That fire that can sometimes burst forth unexpectedly. My former master was like that. Sometimes, I thought of him more as a force of nature than a man. An earthquake that could level a city in a night.

**Joanna**      *[incredulously]* So you're okay with this?

**Judas**        For now. There's a time and place for everything. At some point, we'll need the man we saw tonight. But hopefully, we won't see him in the town tomorrow.

### Scene 3

Jesus , Joanna , John , Judas , Susanna

*{Yet later that night, a little before dawn, in the women's tent.}*

**Joanna**      *[anxiously]* Are you awake?

**Susanna**    *[sleepily]* Barely. The first light always wakes me, but don't worry, I can go right back to sleep.

**Joanna**      I think something's wrong.

**Susanna** What is it?

**Joanna** Listen! Can you hear that?

**Susanna** Ummm...someone's up and about already.

**Joanna** Someone's been walking around out there for over an hour now. Not doing anything; just pacing back and forth. I think it might be the rabbi.

**Susanna** *[groaning]* Not again.

**Joanna** Will you come with me to check on him?

**Susanna** Ugh. All right. I guess I'm not going to get back to sleep either way.

*{They exit their tent and find Jesus kneeling on the ground in a clearing.}*

**Joanna** I think he's praying!

**Susanna** Good! That's exactly what he needs to calm himself down. We should have thought of it last night.

**Jesus** *[praying calmly]* I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

*{He stops, and after a long silence, the women speak.}*

**Joanna** Rabbi?

**Susanna** Rabbi, are you done praying?

*{Jesus rises and looks at the women.}*

**Jesus** *[a little dizzily, as if he's still a little dazed by exhaustion]* What are you doing up so early? We have a big day ahead of us, you know.

**Joanna** We were worried about you.

**Jesus** Really? Why?

**Susanna** You were so angry at the town in the middle of the night. Remember?

**Jesus** Shouldn't that have made you worry about the town rather than about me?

**Joanna** Well, you were pretty worn out. We were worried about your health.

**Jesus** *[becoming a little more animated or agitated]* My health! "Physician, heal thyself!" That's what they'll say.

**Susanna** Huh? Who are "they"?

**Jesus** "They will look upon him whom they pierced!"

**Susanna** Rabbi, what are you talking about?

**Joanna** *[whispering to Susanna]* I think you'd better to get the others.

*{Susanna exits.}*

**Jesus** *[beginning to really ramble]* Others he saved. He could not save himself!

**Joanna** *[trying to make small talk]* We don't have a doctor in the group, do we? Maybe we should try to recruit one. We've been lucky so far that no one's gotten seriously ill.

**Jesus** *[getting more worked up]* Don't worry about sicknesses of the body. Worry about sicknesses of the soul! For what goes into the mouth goes into the stomach and then out into the latrine. But what comes *out* of the mouth: that's what truly defiles! Evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander!

**Joanna** *[trying to change the subject]* Rabbi, what were you praying about just now? What are the things the Father hid from the wise but showed to children?

**Jesus** *[solemnly]* All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

*{Joanna waits for more explanation, but Jesus says nothing more.}*

**Joanna** *[uncertainly]* Uh huh. Well, maybe you should try to get a little more sleep before everyone gets up.

**Jesus** *[becoming more agitated]* Can't! Have to...have to see the town again! Yes!



*{He begins to walk toward the view of the town where he was yelling before.}*

**Joanna** Rabbi, no! That won't do any good! What you need is sleep!

**Jesus** Sleep! That knits the raveled sleeve of care.

*{The others arrive on the scene.}*

**Joanna** *[to the others]* Help!

**Susanna** Oh no! He going to scream at the town again!

**John** Rabbi, why don't you go back to bed? You'll feel better with a little more sleep.

**Judas** Let him go! Let him do what he has to do!

**Joanna** *[to Judas]* He's going to be wreck for the town! He's got to get some sleep!

**Judas** *[breezily]* Hey, if you think you can grab hold of the earthquake and stop it shaking, be my guest!

*{Jesus stops at the edge of the promontory and pauses for a long time. Then he calls out to the town in a strong, compassionate voice that breaks at times with grief.}*

**Jesus** *[slowly and with great feeling]*  
Come to me!  
All who are worn out by grief  
And weighed down by care,  
And I will give you rest.  
Take my yoke upon you  
And learn from me!  
For my yoke is easy,  
And my burden is light!  
For I am gentle and humble in heart,  
And you will find rest for you souls!

*{A long silence.}*

**Susanna** Wow.

**John** Heart of my heart.

**Joanna** Praise to the earthquake!

**Judas** I think we're ready for the town now.

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