

# **A Storytelling Commentary on Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

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“But to what will I compare this generation?  
It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,  
‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;  
we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

For John came neither eating nor drinking,  
and they say, ‘He has a demon’.  
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.”

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

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

The structure of this section of Matthew is first the parable of the children, then the prayer of thanks to God, and then the address to the audience as those who have heavy burdens and are weary.

The dynamics of this are first the playful intro, which involves the listeners and gets them to identify with the children in the marketplace. You can look at them and imagine children sitting in the marketplace and taunting each other, in this case accusing each other of playing and the other not dancing and wailing but mourning. Jesus then uses this metaphor in describing the critics’ response to John the Baptist and to him. They are very different, but the critics are finding ways to criticize both of them in some way. I think the playfulness extends to these critiques to not take them too seriously.

Jesus' prayer is a real prayer between him and God. It is about the way in which God has revealed the kingdom of God to little ones, to those who are not necessarily wise and successful in the eyes of the world. The sign of this in relation to the logic of these sayings is then that all things have been handed over to the son. That is just a sign that wisdom had been vindicated and that these things have also been revealed to infants, to

those who were not respected in the eyes of the world. Jesus knows the Father and the Father in turn knows him.

The last part of this discourse then builds on the identification with Jesus that is invited by the prayer and the description of this inside track that is present in relation to the knowledge of God to anyone to whom Jesus chooses to reveal God. And clearly, the listeners are chosen to have these things revealed to them. Jesus' words here are consolation to those who are weary and are weighed down. This may imply in part the contrast between his way of interpretation of the Torah and that of the Pharisees who multiplied the number of requirements so that they became a heavy burden. So, this would fit within his critique of the Pharisees and his critics earlier in this talk but it is directed at people who are being overwhelmed by a variety of things: work, children, family, not having enough money, and religious obligations that made things more difficult. The spirit of this part of Jesus' address is on the one hand a kind of gentle teasing about those who are his critics and then an invitation to the people to come to him and be part of his community.