My 40-year college reunion is coming up in September and reminiscing recently with fraternity brothers and class mates, we recalled some of the stupid stunts we pulled back then. One such stunt was to climb inside one of the big upright clothes dryers in the dormitory laundry room, wedge yourself tight against the drum sides, have someone put coins in the slot, hold in the door contact button to make the dryer think the door was closed, and push the spin cycle button. Whoever rode out the most revolutions won!

I don’t know about you, but sometimes I feel like I live inside one of those dryers stuck on the spin cycle! Things happen so fast that I’m left reeling and the pace doesn’t slow down! Can you relate to that? If so, then hear again these words from Jesus: "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, 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 shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." How sweet is that promise! Because, who among us couldn’t use some rest?

WE NEED REST. Our lives are hectic, demanding, complex. Every day we read and hear about global unrest, personal unrest, corporate unrest, civil unrest. We strain under the weight of family issues, financial issues, legal issues, social issues, community issues. Greed, power struggles, conflicts, grudges, gossip, addictions and compulsions, they all take their toll on us. We hunger for someone who can sort out the confusing, conflicting, callings that demand our attention and who can set our world on the right path to healing and wholeness. We’d love to hide away from it all on our private island. But Jesus doesn't offer us escape. He offers us a yoke, a tool to help us do what we need to do. "Come unto me, and together we'll see this thing through."

JESUS IS ABLE TO GIVE REST: Jesus has the power to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, to cleanse the leper, to bring new life to the dead. He was able to feed five thousand with a few loaves and fishes. He was able to still the storm and to calm the raging sea. Surely then he has the ability to give us rest!

HOW MAY WE FIND THAT REST? Jesus says, "Take my yoke and learn of me." Wait a minute. Aren’t we just swapping one burden for another? NO! Because yokes are made for TEAMS of horses, TEAMS of oxen, TEAMS of mules. "You're trying to do is all by yourself;" Jesus says, "Let me work with you. Follow my lead. Rely on my help, my strength, my power, to see you through." That does not mean that our tasks are simple and require little effort. My yoke is “easy” means that his yoke is well fitted, custom made to you so that it does not rub you raw and chafe you. His yoke fits you and lets you focus on the work to be done, not on the irritation of the harness. With Jesus, your efforts become productive and meaningful. Under His yoke your burdens are halved and your power is doubled! You learn from him what it is you are to be and to do.
I read that the average Budweiser Clydesdale horse can pull about 7,000 pounds. Put harness two Clydesdales together, however, and they can pull 18,000 pounds. However, working as a team, with proper training, the same two Clydesdales are capable of pulling 25,000 pounds—more than 3 times as much as one Clydesdale.

That’s called synergy. Get two people working tandem to create ideas and solve problems, and they can produce much more than by either one working alone. Think how effective our lives could be if we worked in tandem with Jesus to serve God who is the source of all ideas, the source of all energy, the source of all that has ever been created.

The English theologian F. B. Meyer once visited the American evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Moody, showing Meyer a team of oxen, said that whenever one of those oxen was being yoked, the other, which might be on the far side of the farmyard, would come trotting up and stand beside the other one until it was yoked in also. Meyer then made this encouraging application to us in our relationship to Christ: “Jesus stands today with the yoke upon His shoulder. He calls to each one and says, ‘Come and share my yoke, and let us plow together the long furrow of your life. I will be a true yokefellow to you. The burden shall be on me.’” (cited in Duncan)

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."
"Come unto me..." Stop right there. Those three words are enough, don't go any further.
Just three words. “Come …unto… me.” Come to Jesus.
When your heart is broken and you have nowhere else to turn; come unto me
if you can't face going at it one more day alone; come unto me
if the loneliness is getting you down; come unto me
if the pain of death has cast a pall over your life; come unto me
if you think no one cares about you, come unto me.
He invites you - Come!
Don't stay where you are - Come!
Don't pity yourself, "woe is me" - Come!
Don't become stagnant - Come! Let me set you free!

When Jesus says, "Come unto me," you realize, don't you, that Jesus is inviting you into relationship, not just offering to take away your burden? Religion is relationship. Think of the Palm 42 which we read earlier: "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." We need relationship, companionship.
We want and need awareness of Jesus present with us.
We have many burdens to bear; we cannot bear them alone.
But Jesus is with you, and he can carry both you and your burdens.
What’s weighing you down? What’s causing you to stumble?
What weighs heavy on your heart, chafes you, irritates you, as you struggle in your yoke?
He invites you to share with him what’s troubling you.
Do nagging memories and doubts weigh heavy on your soul?
“Why did do I that?” “Why didn't I do this instead of that?” Lay them down!
Is your calendar overloaded with things to do? Lay it down!
Is the TV eating up too much of your time? Lay it down!
Are you obsessed about getting ahead in life, about growing older, or how to raise children in
this crazy world? Lay it down!
Your fears, your worries, your weariness, your remorse…lay it ALL down at the feet of Jesus and let him help you to carry your burdens you must bear, but need not bear alone.
Let his love fill you again. Let his spirit lift yours. Let his power renew you.
He will hold you close to his heart.
He will give you strength and you will find rest for your spirit and your body.

Tom Long, my preaching professor back in seminary, shares this story that might help you understand.
During the civil rights movement and the Montgomery, AL bus boycott, one of the supporters of the bus boycott was an elderly Black woman, known affectionately as "Mother" Pollard. Mother Pollard was walking miles each day to and from work instead of riding the bus. Because of her old age and health problems, the boycott leaders encouraged her to ride the bus and save her strength. She refused, however, saying "My feets is tired, but my soul is rested." (Long)

In her hunger and thirst for righteousness, in her struggle to carry her cross, in her calling to follow Jesus, Ms. Pollard endured hardship and sacrifice. She paid the cost. Her feet were tired, but her soul was rested. Why? Because Jesus was with her. In spite of the demands she knew his rest, his hope, his strength. She knew her efforts would make a difference, because they made a difference to God, and they would benefit other people.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US? Sometimes we must give up having things our way, doing what we alone want, having what we have, because it will be better for the group, better for the greater whole than for us alone.
Jesus calls us to spread the gospel, to make disciples, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to put our hearts and pocketbooks and our very souls on the line for His cause. Jesus' yoke is not light and easy because it makes no demands on us. It's light and easy because we do not bear alone. We bear it with each other. We bear it with Jesus who yokes himself to us, adding to our strength HIS strength, adding to our efforts HIS efforts, bringing us direction and bringing us into step with Him.

Are you stuck in the Spin Cycle? Would you like to find balance in your life again?
Come, set a spell with Jesus.
Allow yourself some time to enjoy the restorative power of nature.
Allow yourself some time with other people – draw strength from them.
Help someone else, do something special for someone.
Allow Jesus to lift your yoke of oppression and accept his partnership–
   Allow him to shape and mold you into the shared / yoked tasks of discipleship.
   For then you are empowered not only to BE disciples but also to make disciples.
Learn from Jesus how he models living and serving, loving, and enjoying life!
He invites you …won’t you come?

There is nothing you cannot handle when yoked to Christ. His strength and companionship and power will see you through. And you will love it! You will thank God for it!
Jesu invites you, “Come to me. Bring me your burdens. Take up my yoke, walk with me, talk with me.” He will pick you up in his arms and carry you a while. He will nurse your wounds. He will hold you close. He will heal you of your brokenness and make you whole. He will set you free to do the right thing, as difficult as that may be!

Your feets will be tired, but your soul will be rested! Amen!

Sources