

“Finding the Right Tempo”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for FUMC Grand Junction, Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ
website: <https://www.fumcgj.org/sermons/>

Scripture Text:

Matthew 11:28-30 [NRSV]

OPENING

The Christian tradition tends toward reinforcing a misunderstanding: That there's one “tempo” in a relationship with God that we all ought to be moving in step with.

And this setup here (*motion to the “living room” setting*) actually contributes to that misunderstanding. Why? Because it's my tempo at this point in my life, but it's not necessarily that of everyone participating in worship today. And it's not even a constant tempo for me! This setup is meant to be an *illustration*, not the ideal model toward which we should all be working all the time.

Anna's Children's Message and her working with two different songs with tempos that were mismatched leads us in the right direction: That music is written with a certain tempo or style in mind, and it's important that it be played that way.

So, for the purposes of this message today, let's talk a little bit about what I mean by “tempo”.

SERMON THOUGHTS

For starters, by “tempo” I'm thinking of “way of relating to God”. Factors influencing that include (but are not limited to) these three:

1. Temperament – SJ (“pillar of the organization”, SP (“life of the party”), NT (“deep thinker”), NF (“relationships are of first importance”)
2. Activities – influenced by introversion / extroversion, but also sensitivities to God's Spirit, e.g., in nature, music, literature, justice, movement / physical activity, quiet / reflective spiritual practices
3. Daily, weekly, monthly rhythms/patterns

TO THE SCRIPTURES –

Some exegetical work here...

- Important context for Matthew 11:28-30 – verse 27
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.

Sounds kind of exclusive, doesn't it? Until you read v. 28: “Come to me, all....”

- Matthew 11:30 and the preferable translation
Greek:

ὁ γὰρ ζυγός μου **χρηστός** καὶ τὸ φορτίον μου ἑλαφρόν ἐστιν.

Key words:

- ✓ ζυγός, “yoke”
- ✓ χρηστός, “fit”
- ✓ φορτίον, “an individual’s burden” and
- ✓ ἐλαφρόν, “light”, as in “not heavy”

English:

“For my yoke fits perfectly and my burden is light.”

- So the idea behind “finding the right tempo” isn’t about honing in on some mysterious, one-size-fits-all combination of style, activities, and daily, weekly, and monthly patterns. It’s about “fit” – finding that combination of activities and patterns that honors your temperament and is expressive and nurturing of your relationship with God.

ILLUSTRATION: The RGP contact lens journey I’m on right now. There is an ideal “fit” for me starting with the prescription, but then incorporating all kinds of other lens parameters that will result in a perfect fit for me. And not only will that fit not be suitable for anyone else, the fit of the lens for one eye will not even be suitable for the other!

SERMON THOUGHTS

So, the idea behind the message for today is “fit”, not “ease”. And in terms of “fit”, there is not one, mysterious one-size-fits-all tempo that we all ought to be working toward for all times and seasons in our lives.

As Anna illustrated in her Children’s Message, what makes for a great tempo for one song makes for a terrible tempo for another.

There is but one goal, one destination, in the spiritual journey: To draw near to God. However, that takes place best for you at any point in time is what constitutes the “right tempo” for you.

But the goal is to draw near to God! What this sermon series is exhorting us to is to pay attention to God – b/c most people, including too many Christians, don’t prioritize drawing near to God...spending time with God...cultivating a relationship with God...nearly high enough on their “Top 10 List” of “Important Things to Do Before I Die”.

CONCLUSION

So, I challenge you to spend some time thinking about meaningful tempo in your life with God in the week ahead. We’re only ten days into the 40+ day Lenten season, and there’s plenty of time to incorporate fresh insights, activities, and rhythms into your spiritual journey that are consistent with your temperament and relationship with God.

TRANSITION to Scout Troop Message