

July 5, 2020

Zen 9:9-10; Rom 8:9,11-13; Mt 11:25-30

Jesus reminds us today that there is a lot of things people can learn, but those things can actually get in the way of really grasping more important things. People who believe that they know better than others (and let's be honest that's all of us at some times) can get prideful. We can tell ourselves that we know more than we do and not listen to other views. Jesus says: *I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones.* The things of God are in some ways complicated (because God is so mysterious) and we need help to understand and apply these, but also can be so simple if we can just believe. Jesus contrasts the attitude of the know-it-all to the simple trust of the child. The more we know, the more we try to use what we know to prove other views wrong. It is like the teenager who is getting older and is now able to see the flaws in adult arguments - they can see new things and become more argumentative and defiant. Many of us can push back against believing the mysterious things of God (which we are told but the world are silly), or shy from the demands of God's moral law (which we are told constrains our freedoms). Jesus asks us to be more like the child who can turn in simple faith and just believe - even if it doesn't seem to make sense to us, or fit a popular viewpoint.

But - we are teenagers - who have all kinds of fancy knowledge. We see the flaws in what others say, we hear things on the news and can see how wrong "the others" are - we turn that same sort of attitude towards the things of God. We think that if I can find the flaws in a politician's statements I can surely pass judgement on God's revelation (which doesn't seem to make sense from a worldly standpoint). We wouldn't dare argue with Einstein about physics - but we believe that we can judge the Church's explanation of God's teaching. This doesn't mean that the Church is right about everything she does, but when it comes to the revelation of God, we can trust that God is communicating to us. We want to believe that they have all the answers, but really, sometimes we're protecting what is comfortable to us, or repeating the ideas of others.

Jesus is speaking the truth, yet others pass judgement on it. They compare what he is saying to the standards of the society in which they live, and judge his words by what they already believe they know. To be like the child Jesus admires, we can't think we already know everything - and we also can't just believe in everything that anyone says that feels good to us.

Difficult as it can be to put aside the things that make us feel comfortable and smart, we need to listen to what God has truly revealed. Even to us who have been brought up in the faith - there is so much misinformation out there we can easily stray from the true message - many have sadly left the faith due to misunderstandings of what the Church actually teaches.

The ways of God are a bit different than we may think they are and are actually much more reasonable than some believe them to be. Rulers, in our worldly estimation, are supposed to be powerful and take charge, but we hear in the first reading: *your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass*. We could be a bit off if we expect God to roll in and just take over human affairs. We are told that the only way to get things done is to beat down the opposition, but we hear in that same reading that this God (who we know has come as Jesus riding meekly into Jerusalem on an ass) *shall banish the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; the warrior's bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations*. This means that he wins the war not with a superior army, but because he does an unexpected thing - he banishes war itself - although many in the world have not got or accepted that message. The way of God which calls us to use love over hate, caring for others instead of using them, fostering peace over fighting - to many, these don't seem to be the right things.

Paul reminds us in the second reading that we as Christians should follow a different set of standards than the worldly way of doing things. Different than knowledge and power-based domination; different than the pleasure-based methods of achieving happiness: *brothers and sisters, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh*. (in other words, we don't owe allegiance to our bodily desires and popular opinion which actually enslave us), he goes on: *For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*. He is pointing to one of those secrets that the people with fancy learning may push to one side. The great and timeless wisdom contained in the unconventional ways of God. Following Jesus and all that he teaches us through his Church does involve some burden - Jesus calls it "taking up his yoke." A yoke is the harness that goes on the necks of a team of oxen as they pull their load or plow. Jesus calls it **his** yoke, because he is in the other side of that yoke, asking us to do only what he is willing to do. He is wanting us to simply come to him as trusting children to be shown the way: *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light*.