

8 Pentecost (A)  
St. Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30  
July 6, 2008

“Aw, c’mon, Jim,” we used to say. “C’mon and play baseball with us.” And Jim would say ‘naw, I don’t want to’. But we knew that Jim wanted us to ask him at least 3 or 4 times ‘til he would finally say ‘aw, ok, I guess I will’. It was a game that all of us played when we were kids together in Hickory.

I thought of that when I read Jesus’ words about how the people of his day, in their responses to John the Baptist and to him, were like petulant, obstinate children who refused to play each other’s games. What my grandmother used to call just plain contrary. It was as if God, the sender of both men, couldn’t win. One couldn’t please that bunch no matter what one did. John the Baptist came to his people as an ascetic, living in the wilderness, and many said he was possessed--had a demon. Jesus came inviting all and mixing with, eating with, ordinary people, some who were religious and social outcasts, and many of the people, especially among the religious elite and the powerful, the allegedly wise and intelligent ones, called him a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

**“Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”** That is, most of the regular people, not the elites, flocked to John for his baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. They considered John a prophet sent from God; he moved their hearts to God. And many of those same people flocked to Jesus, because they found in Jesus God’s own compassion and understanding, God’s own forgiveness, new life from God, and a new access to God.

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And so Jesus offers a public prayer of thanksgiving that God has “**...hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to infants...**” These things? What things? His deeds of power, his miracles of healing (for example, raising the synagogue leader’s dead daughter) in Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and the source of those deeds of power and their significance. Wise and intelligent? Did Jesus say this with sadness, a hint of sarcasm, with the faintest hint of a smile, perhaps? Who were the wise and intelligent? Most of the rabbis, most of the intellectuals...but as the hymn has it ‘the humble poor believe’ they trust him, they see him as Saviour and Lord.

Is Jesus against intellectual power? Of course not! But he is against intellectual pride, intellectual arrogance, the kind that says ‘what could this itinerant rabbi from Galilee possibly have to teach me?? Jesus is speaking from his experience of being rejected by these so-called wise and intelligent ones.

But God has revealed who Jesus is to the humble, to the poor and the poor in heart; to the ‘infants’ his disciples and any who want to take his yoke, his teaching and his way and learn from him. “**...and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**” What is it about the Father that Jesus is revealing to these ‘infants’ these humble, trusting folk? “If you want to see what God is like, if you want to see the mind of God, the heart of God, the nature of God, if you want to see God’s whole attitude to people--look at me. (Gospel of John)

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**“He who has seen me has seen the Father.”**

And thus the ‘comfortable words’ **“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.”**

What does that invitation mean to us? In what sense are we weary, exhausted, carrying heavy burdens? Are we in worry and pain? Are we alone? Are we trying to do too much by ourselves? Can we ask for help? Can we admit our need of Jesus? **Take my yoke...** the yoke is a phrase for *entering into submission to*. But the word *easy* in Greek is *chrestos*, which can mean well-fitting. There is a legend that Jesus the carpenter made the best fitting oxen yokes in all of Galilee. Thus the ‘Jesus yoke’ to which we are invited is one that is tailor made for us, for our needs and our abilities....And we are with him, in a well-fitting connection, and with our brothers and sisters...joined, not alone...

“... and my burden is light.” When by God’s grace we are yoked to Jesus and to one another, then whatever our burdens are, they are lighter. Is that not our experience?

Amen.