

Reflection for Wednesday 15 July

Collect for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

O Lord,
we beseech you mercifully
to receive the prayers of your people who call upon you,
and grant that they may both perceive
and know what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Matthew 11:25-27

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."

Reflection

At this point in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus has been travelling through the Galilean cities, healing the sick and performing many wonderful deeds. These actions should have been signs to the people around him that he was the Messiah but in fact, the people in these cities have largely been unable or unwilling to see what is in front of their eyes.

Jesus begins the passage we have heard today by giving thanks to God that, although the wise and well educated can't recognise him as Messiah, the infants (God's beloved little ones) can. This is good news because these are the people who are usually considered incapable of deep understanding. Jesus gives thanks that their understanding must be according to God's will; the very fact that the little ones have responded to God is evidence of God's self-revelation. These people lack the education or the opportunities and advantages to come to this kind of knowledge themselves, but they can respond when God reveals God's-self to them.

In part, they are probably more open to seeing God because they do not have pride in themselves. Pride keeps us from the love and knowledge of God. It closes the mind to God's truth and wisdom. By contrast, true humility and an open mind can lead us to the love and knowledge of God. The ordinary people of Jesus' time would have considered the learned doctors of the Law to be on a higher level than themselves; that is often still the case today. But, because they are humble enough to respond to God, these ordinary people are the ones who are invited to the dignity of being adopted sisters and brothers of God's Son. Child-like simplicity and humility is the soil in which the grace of God can take root.

Jesus' loving father, God, has handed all things over to him. Jesus has come to fulfil God's plans and he does this by drawing unlikely and unimportant people into a close, loving relationship with God. In giving himself completely to the Father, Jesus wants to show us the Father's love, and that it is through Jesus revealing God's nature to us that we can become God's children.

The world wants us to be intelligent and successful, and there is nothing intrinsically wrong with those attributes. It's just that they are not enough. It is not our intelligence or our success

that draws us closer to God or makes us members of God's family. The ability to see our need of God, to have humble hearts that recognise our own need, these are the attributes that draw us closer to God and that allow us to see God's love for us; love that can never be earned but that is freely available to anyone who will simply ask for it.

Let us pray for hearts that are more fully open to receiving God's gift of love, just as little children run to their parents knowing that they are precious just as they are and that they will be embraced in love. Let us pray for the grace to become more willing to be surprised by what we don't know about God and therefore more able to learn and to recognise the Messiah at work in the world around us. Amen.