

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A  
Zechariah 9:9-10  
Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14  
Romans 8:9, 11-13  
Matthew 11:25-30  
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Apparently there used to be (and may still be for all I know) a cult called Rosecrucianism. For an annual membership fee, devotees periodically received by mail a packet of secret wisdom purported to be based on the teachings of the Pharaoh Akhnaton, who reigned in 1350 B.C. A novice was at first admitted only to the outer circles of the cult. Over the course of several years, if the membership fees kept coming in, the packets would keep arriving, until, at last, the initiate would receive the final envelope, containing the secrets of salvation. The cult exploited a couple of deep-seated human instincts: The first is that salvation must be a secret knowledge that only a select few are able to understand. The second is that salvation ought to be expensive.

The Gospel denies both of these assertions. For a start, when it comes to being saved, being clever apparently doesn't help. If anything, having a big brain is a hindrance. That's clearly the implication of Jesus' prayer in our Gospel today:

"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.  
Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will."

In fact, in Christ nothing is hidden. It is all right there on the page:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.” The Son of God lived and died for us, and was raised from the dead. If we believe in him, and follow him, we will have eternal life with him. There it is, the secret of salvation, all right out in the open. If the wise and learned don’t get it, it may be because they are inclined to depend upon their ability to figure life out on their own – to believe they can achieve whatever salvation they require by their own effort.

And salvation in Christ is free. I’m not talking about the collection basket now. I mean it’s free in the wider sense -- in the sense that we have done nothing to earn it. Eternal life with God does not belong to us by right. It’s a gift. We have been given something that we would never have been able to purchase on our own. Since that unfortunate incident in the Garden of Eden, we are all beneficiaries of a divine grant in aid for the morally disadvantaged.

The problem with things that are free is that we tend not to value them very highly. You can be sure that after years of membership fees, when a Rosicrucian finally received that last crucial envelope, he or she must have poured over its contents with great earnestness. God’s free offer of salvation in Christ is often not taken so seriously. Perhaps it’s a case of easy come easy go. But if we think about it, there is a sense in which our salvation has been the most expensive thing imaginable. It cost the life of our Savior. That should be enough to make the good news of Christ our most precious possession.