

**St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church
Moore Street, Adelaide**

**Reflection for the 5th Sunday after Pentecost
Belief and Unbelief – Is there a God-given choice?**

Everyone in our society has a choice: to be a person of faith or unbelief. The choice we make depends on so many factors – upbringing, good and bad experiences of church, the influence of friends and work colleagues, and others. Is it, however, our own choice in the end? The Gospel reading today suggests that some are chosen by God to believe while others are not.

This poses a great difficulty for us because we prefer to think that everyone can be person of faith potentially. We find it hard to imagine God deliberately choosing to make someone an unbeliever. It does not fit our notions of justice and kindness.

As always we need to remember that our notions of justice are not necessarily the same as God's. We should not make God according to our own convictions. However, we need to look more closely at this Gospel reading.

Is there a principle underlining God's choices here? Far from trying to understand God in any prescriptive sense, it does seem that God hides the truth from wise and the learned people and instead, reveals the truth to people who are humble and lowly. We can see here that many wise and learned people can be arrogant and proud and quite possibly be unable to repent because of this. It is nothing to do with God being selective in any arbitrary sense or vindictive.

The key to God's welcome and gift of faith is that we need to be conscious of our need of God's grace and equally conscious of our own failings. Such consciousness makes us more humble with no room for any arrogance.

Interestingly, Jesus calls us to take on his yoke which he says is easy to bear. The law of Jesus' yolk is love. Our sins are forgiven and now the task is to love another without worrying about unnecessary matters. The law of love is easy to learn, Jesus says unless we make it more difficult for ourselves.

In answer to the question about belief and unbelief, a first step towards finding an answer is to look carefully and critically at oneself. To what extent, if any, am I putting myself out of contention for belief? Am I truly receptive to the Gospel or do I tend strongly to have too much faith in myself?

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