

BIBLE STUDY
February 10, 2020

THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sirach 15: 15-20

Matthew 5: 17-37

1 Corinthians 2: 6-10

1. Sirach 15: 15-20

- Sirach is also known as *Ecclesiasticus* and *Wisdom of Ben Sira*. Sirach is the Hebrew form of "of Sira."
- It is one of the deuterocanonical books or apocrypha. It was written originally in Hebrew but then translated into Greek. For centuries it was only known in its Greek form. In the 1950s, the Hebrew version of it was found. It is not considered canonical by Protestants, but is held to be canonical by Catholics.
- The author is a wise man who lived in Jerusalem and taught young men the value of pursuing wisdom by obeying God's commandments. The book consists of maxims and proverbs grouped together according to themes.
- At the beginning of chapter 15 (1-6), Wisdom, personified as a woman, takes the seeker of wisdom to herself as a mother care for her child. She is teacher, nourisher, guide, and advocate. She will make the seeker of wisdom great and respected among his peers.
- In 15: 7-10, the fool—the one who does not seek wisdom—will not seek her out, or be attracted to her. They have not been chosen by God to find her and have her praise upon their tongues.
- 15: 11-12, yet the unwise cannot blame God or think it is God's doing that they do not seek wisdom.
- 15: 14, God created all human beings with free will.
- 15: 15 Keeping God's commandments is a matter of choosing. Loyalty=obeying the commandments=doing God's will
- 15:16-17 we need to choose. God puts before us fire and water, death and life. Choose and go with it. Whatever we choose, it will be ours.
- 15: 18-20 God's ways are great. He sees and knows all things. God sees everything and reads the intentions of the human heart. He never forces any one. He does not cause anyone to sin. He holds wrong doers accountable.

2. Matthew 5: 17-37

- 5: 17- 20: Jesus establishes himself as the true Lawgiver. As Son of God, he has the authority to interpret the Law and Prophets according to the will of God. Early Christians were criticized for having "thrown out the Law." They recall these words of Jesus to show that they have not thrown out the Law but are seeking "a surpassing righteousness." Instead of attempting to fulfill the letter of the law as the scribes and the Pharisees, they seek to fulfill the spirit of the Law which is more demanding. It is significant that Jesus says he fulfills the Law *and*

the Prophets because the prophets called for mercy and justice for the oppressed. Hosea 6: 6 says, "What I desire is mercy and not sacrifice." Throughout the Gospel Jesus will insist on the priority of love, compassion, mercy, justice and faith. For Jesus, everything was seen through the lens of love of God and neighbor with human relationships being testimony of the quality of one's relationship with God.

- Jesus will present six examples of what the Law dictated and how the Christian should strive to fulfill the spirit of the law. The Christian goes deeper for total conversion and change.
- **5: 21-26:** Teaching on anger. The Law said, "You shall not kill," but Jesus says that we should not even get angry. Anger is the root cause of murder. Nip it in the bud. Take away anger and you eliminate murder. How hard it is to root out anger—it requires a total transformation of self. That is what Jesus is asking of his disciples—a totally new way of thinking and acting.
- **Raqa:** an insult corresponding to "you imbecile!" or "you blockhead!"
- Reconciliation is so important that one should leave his/her gift at the altar and be reconciled first. (I desire mercy not sacrifice)
- It is wise to reconcile because you never know if a worse fate awaits you in court or in the heavenly court.
- **5: 27-30:** The Law says, "You shall not commit adultery." Jesus says, "You shall not even have lust in your heart." The root cause of adultery is lust. Root out the lust and you prevent adultery. This requires a radical change of heart. We should be so intent on not committing sin that we would rather suffer the loss of a body part than lose our life in the afterworld. This hyperbole is a prophetic way of shocking his listeners into reconsidering their ways.
- **5:31-32:** The Law says the man may divorce his wife with a bill of divorce. Jesus says, "Do not divorce at all (with exception of unlawful marriage). Divorce and remarriage is adultery. Jesus presents a new vision of marriage that is more than the legal and one sided view of the man's dominance and ownership of his wife to a mutual covenant of life and love that would only end with death.
- **5: 33-37:** The Law says, "Do not make a false oath." Jesus says, "Do not swear an oath at all." Our word should be so sacred and trustworthy that we do not need an oath at all. Everything we say is the truth. How can we even think that we can swear by heaven or by any other thing? We have no right to them because they all belong to God. Let your Yes be Yes and your No be No.

3. **1 Corinthians 2: 6-10**

- The community of Corinth valued eloquent and flashy speakers of philosophy and sciences. Some Christians at Corinth prided themselves at being wiser in spiritual things than other members of the local church. Paul is criticizing these proponents of human wisdom and compares it to God's wisdom.
- **2: 6:** Paul is speaking to mature Christians. He implies that those who are impressed with human wisdom and clever speakers are immature in their faith.

Those who think themselves better than the weaker members of the community are immature in faith. Later, he will say that the truly mature are rooted in love.

- **2: 7** Paul is speaking of God's wisdom (the wisdom of the Cross of Jesus) that is mysterious and hidden—not immediately appreciated and understood by everyone. God has been planning the revelation of this wisdom from before time for our glory.
- **2: 8** Rulers without faith had no idea of this kind of wisdom. If they knew it, they would never have killed Jesus.
- **2: 9** God's plan is so far beyond our understanding that we cannot even imagine what he has in store for us.
- **2: 10** It is only through the Spirit that we come to know God's wise plan.

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.

-this version is credited to Mother Teresa