

**BIBLE STUDY**  
**August 26, 2019**

**The Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Sirach 3: 17-18, 20, 28-29**

**Luke 14: 1, 7-14**

**Hebrews 12: 18-19, 22-24A**

**1. Sirach 3: 17-18, 20, 28-29**

- Sirach is also known as the Wisdom of Ben Sira, or Ecclesiasticus, or Sirach. It is named after its author, Yeshua (Jesus), son of Eleazar, son of Sira. Sirach is the Greek form of the name. It is called Ecclesiasticus (meaning "Church book") because it was used so often for the instruction of converts.
- It is considered canonical by Catholics but not canonical by Protestants. The Greek version of the book was the only known version until the 1950s. Then, a Hebrew version was discovered which is the original version of the book.
- The author was devoted to the wisdom tradition, the law, the Jewish priesthood, the Temple, and divine worship. He wanted to share with his readers how to maintain religious faith and integrity through study of the books that were sacred to the Jewish tradition.
- The book contains numerous maxims, grouped together by common topics. They deal with subjects such as the individual, the family, and the community in their relationships with one another and with God. It treats of friendship, education, poverty and wealth, laws, religious worship and many other topics.
- The contents may be divided: Chapters 1-43: moral instruction; Chapters 44:1-50: 24: eulogy of the heroes of Israel; 51: 1-12: gratitude to God; 51: 13-30: invitation to the unschooled to acquire true wisdom.
- Chapter 3 begins with the obligation to honor and respect parents. By showing respect especially to old and infirm parents, the sins of children are pardoned. Failure to honor parents merits a curse from God.
- 3: 17-24: Humility gives you a true estimate of yourself so that you will do what should be done, and avoid what is beyond your understanding and strength. Intellectual pride can lead you astray. Ben Sira may be warning his students about the dangers of Greek philosophy.

**2. Luke 14: 1, 7-14**

- V. 1 sets the scene for the whole chapter. On a Sabbath, Jesus is invited to dinner at the home of one of the leading Pharisees. The guests at the dinner are watching Jesus carefully. We are told that this will be an opportunity for instruction and for controversy.
- Vv. 7-14: **Parable of the conduct of invited guests and hosts.** In Jesus' time receiving honor and maintaining honor were very highly sought values. Jesus is asking his listeners to imagine the shame they would feel if they had taken a position of honor and then, because it was intended for

someone else, were asked to give it up and take a less honorable seat. This would cause great shame in a society that valued honor. It would take a long time before someone would recover from such a slight to their dignity. Jesus recommends that a person take a lower position and then when asked to come higher will receive more honor.

- It seems that this may be just practical advice for how to behave at a banquet. However, it is described as a parable and so must have a deeper moral meaning.
- In Luke's Gospel, there is a theme of the Great Reversal. At the end of time, the first shall be last and last shall be first. Mary says in the Magnificat (1:46-55) that "He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich sent away empty." (52-53). In Luke's version of the Beatitudes, they are not only "Blessed are..." but "Woe to..." The poor, the hungry, the weeping, the hated, the excluded, and the denounced are "Blessed." The rich, the filled, the laughing, those spoken well of are recipients of the "Woe." At the end of the world, God is going to turn things upside down. Those who suffered in this life will be lifted up and those who were well off in this life will be cast down.
- Therefore, Jesus says: If losing your seat of honor at a banquet will cause you shame. How much more will being cast down at the end of time cause shame for eternity.
- Therefore, take a lower seat now---i.e. associate with those who are poor, hungry, weeping, excluded, and denounced—so that you will have a higher place in the Kingdom. If you associate now with only the rich, the filled, the laughing, and those spoken well of—you will be cast down in the next life.
- If you humble yourself now, you will be exalted in the next life. If you are exalted now, you will be humbled in the next life.
- **Advice to hosts:** Common wisdom and practice would say invite those who will invite you back. Therefore, you will increase your circle of influence and prestige. Jesus says the opposite. Invite those who cannot pay you back or invite you. Ironically, they will be paying you back with an invitation to heaven.

### **3. Hebrews 12: 18-19, 22-24A**

- The author contrasts two scenes: Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai as Moses received the Law and Christians who stand at Mount Zion of the heavenly Jerusalem.
- At Sinai all is fear at the tremendous majesty of God. The people are forbidden to even touch the mountain much less climb it. When God come down the mountain is covered in smoke. Thunder booms out as God speaks. The people are so terrified that they tell Moses to tell them what God says. They do not want to hear God directly because they fear they will die.

- On the other hand, Mt. Zion and the New Jerusalem are peaceful and inviting. There are many angels and Jesus with his saving blood. The scene is reminiscent of the heavenly liturgies in the Book of Revelation.