



Handout for week of 10/8/18 Mk. 10: 17-31 & Wis. 7: 7-11

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Wisdom 7: 7 And so I prayed, and understanding was given me; I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me. 8 I esteemed her more than scepters and thrones; compared with her, I held riches as nothing. 9 I reckoned no precious stone to be her equal, for compared with her, all gold is a pinch of sand, and beside her, silver ranks as mud. 10 I loved her more than health or beauty, preferred her to the light, since her radiance never sleeps. 11 In her company all good things came to me, and at her hands incalculable wealth.

COMMENTARY:

The Book of Wisdom was written about a hundred years before the coming of Christ. Its author, whose name is not known to us, was a member of the Jewish community at Alexandria, in Egypt. He wrote in Greek, in a style patterned on that of Hebrew verse. At times he speaks in the person of

Solomon, placing his teachings on the lips of the wise king of Hebrew tradition in order to emphasize their value. His profound knowledge of the earlier Old Testament writings is reflected in almost every line of the book, and marks him, like Ben Sira, as an outstanding representative of religious devotion and learning among the sages of postexilic Judaism.

The primary purpose of the sacred author was the edification of his co-religionists in a time when they had experienced suffering and oppression, in part at least at the hands of apostate fellow Jews. To convey his message he made use of the most popular religious themes of his time, namely the splendor and worth of divine wisdom (Wisdom 6:22-11:1), the glorious events of the Exodus (Wisdom 11:2-16; 12:23-27; 15:18-19:22), God's mercy (Wisdom 11:17-12:22), the folly of idolatry (Wisdom 13:1-15:17), and the manner in which God's justice is vindicated in rewarding or punishing the individual soul (Wisdom 1:1-6:21). The first ten chapters especially form a preparation for the fuller teachings of Christ and his Church. Many passages from this section of the book, notably Wisdom 3:1-8, are used by the Church in her liturgy.

The principal divisions of the Book of Wisdom are:

Reward of Justice (Wisdom 1:1-6:21)

Praise of Wisdom by Solomon (Wisdom 6:22-11:1)

Special Providence of God during the Exodus (Wisdom 11:2-16; 12:23-27; 15:18-19:22) with digressions on God's mercy (Wisdom 11:17-12:22) and on the folly and shame of idolatry (Wisdom 13:1-15:17)