



Handout for week of 2/25/19

Luke 6:39-45 & Sir. 27:4-7

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Fr. Robert Beck (subscription)

Stone, Naomi. [Journey of Love](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [On Being Loved Sinners](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind

c1568; Bruegel, Pieter, ca. 1525-1569

[Can the Blind lead the Blind?](#)

Sir. 27: 4 When a sieve is shaken, the refuse appears; so do a person's faults when he speaks. 5 The kiln tests the potter's vessels; so the test of a person is in his conversation. 6 Its fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree; so a person's speech discloses the

cultivation of his mind. 7 Do not praise anyone before he speaks, for this is the way people are tested.

COMMENTARY: The Church uses the Book of Sirach extensively in her liturgy. The Book of Sirach derives its name from the author, Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach (Sir 50:27). Its earliest title seems to have been "Wisdom of the Son of Sirach." The designation "Liber Ecclesiasticus," meaning "Church Book," appended to some Greek and Latin manuscripts was due to the extensive use which the church made of this book in presenting moral teaching to catechumens and to the faithful.

The author, a sage who lived in Jerusalem, was thoroughly imbued with love for the law, the priesthood, the temple, and divine worship. As a wise and experienced observer of life he addressed himself to his contemporaries with the motive of helping them to maintain religious faith and integrity through study of the holy books, and through tradition.

The book contains numerous maxims formulated with care, grouped by affinity, and dealing with a variety of subjects such as the individual, the family, and the community in their relations with one another and with God. It treats of friendship, education, poverty and wealth, the law, religious worship, and many other matters which reflect the religious and social customs of the time.

Written in Hebrew between 200 and 175 B.C., the text was translated into Greek sometime after 132 B.C. by the author's grandson, who also wrote a Foreword which contains information about the book, the author, and the translator himself. Until the close of the nineteenth century Sirach was known only in translations, of which this Greek rendering was the most important. From it the Latin version was made. Between 1896 and 1900, again in 1931, and several times since 1956, manuscripts were discovered containing in all about two thirds of the Hebrew text, which agrees substantially with the Greek. One such text, from Masada, is pre-Christian in date.

Though not included in the Hebrew Bible after the first century A.D., nor accepted by Protestants, the Book of Sirach has always been recognized by the Catholic Church as divinely inspired and canonical. The Foreword, though not inspired, is placed in the Bible because of its antiquity and importance. The contents of Sirach are of a discursive nature, not easily divided into separate parts. Sir 1-43 deal largely with moral instruction; Sir 44:1-50:24 contain a eulogy of the heroes of Israel and some of the patriarchs. There are two appendices in which the author expresses his gratitude to God, and appeals to the unlearned to acquire true wisdom.