

Sermon January 3rd  
Sirach 24:1-12

May the words from my lips and the meditations of our hearts always be pleasing to you O God.

Our readings today focus on wisdom. This wisdom is not like knowledge. This wisdom is more palpable. More personal. When wisdom is spoken of in scripture and other writings from antiquity wisdom has a female persona. Wisdom is often referred to as Sophia. Wisdom in scripture is active. Wisdom is the divine word of God coming from the mouth of God and ruling over all creation.

Our 1st reading today is from the Book of Sirach. I would like to invite you to pick up your favourite translation of the bible and see if you can find where the book of Sirach is.

I'll wait.....

Pause

I imagine that for many of you the Book of Sirach is not in your bible. In fact, you may never have heard of Sirach - may never have read this material.

The Book of Sirach is one of the books between the books - or testaments. It is considered deuterocanonical or part of the apocrypha. Meaning that it is "outside the canon". It is in the canon for Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and most Oriental Orthodox.

It is the largest wisdom book from antiquity to have survived. It is a Jewish work originally in Hebrew and can be dated to between 175 and 200 BCE. It is attributed to the Jewish scribe Ben Sira of Jerusalem.

It is a book very similar to Proverbs in that it is a book of ethical teaching.

Sirach is cited in several works of the early Christians. This winter we will have an opportunity in Christian Education to look at some of these early Christian works or Gospels that you may not be familiar with.

For the author of Sirach, wisdom is synonymous with the will of God. He shows a profound knowledge of the human heart, the disillusionment of experience and has sympathy with the poor and the oppressed.

And a Biblical fun fact! The Book of Sirach contains the only teaching of explicit recommendation of physicians. Which pits it against more common teachings that illness was related to sin.

In our reading today we hear wisdom speaking of her beginning. She was created at the beginning of time. She was given a command by her creator - dwell in Jacob, make Israel your inheritance - Jerusalem was to be her domain.

Wisdom speaks :

Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.....I took root in an honoured people....

Wisdom shall not cease to be. Wisdom remains with us. Wisdom the divine word of God.

One of my favourite biblical citations comes from Sirach.  
“Wine and music gladden the heart, but the love of friends is better than either.”

So my dear friends in Christ, may this new year be filled with wisdom like that found in Sirach. May our hearts be gladdened and may we know the love of many friends.

AMEN