

# SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## LECTIONARY #76

READING I Sirach 15:15–20

### A reading from the Book of Sirach

If you choose you **can** keep the commandments, they will  
save you;  
if you trust in God, you too shall live;  
he has set before you fire and water;  
to whichever you **choose**, stretch forth your **hand**.  
Before man are life and death, good and evil,  
whichever he **chooses** shall be given him.  
Immense is the **wisdom** of the LORD;  
he is **mighty** in **power**, and **all-seeing**.  
The eyes of **God** are on those who **fear** him;  
he understands man's every deed.  
No one does he command to **act** unjustly,  
to **none** does he **give** license to **sin**.

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 17–18, 33–34 (1b)

#### R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Blessed are they whose way is blameless,  
who walk in the law of the LORD.  
Blessed are they who observe his decrees,  
who seek him with all their heart.

You have commanded that your precepts  
be diligently kept.  
Oh, that I might be firm in the ways  
of keeping your statutes!

Be good to your servant, that I may live  
and keep your words.  
Open my eyes, that I may consider  
the wonders of your law.

Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of  
your statutes,  
that I may exactly observe them.  
Give me discernment, that I may observe  
your law  
and keep it with all my heart.

### READING I

In a long speech to Israel before they entered the Promised Land, Moses told the people that if they obeyed God's commandments, they would live and God would bless them. If they turned away and did not listen, they would perish. He emphasized the decision each one must make: "Choose life, that you may live" (Deuteronomy 30:15–20). Centuries later (about 180 BC), a wisdom teacher named Jesus Ben Sira gave similar advice to young men in Jerusalem aspiring to be scribes. Adding to the traditions of his ancestors, Ben Sira teaches about wisdom,

popular in the culture of his day. Sirach's underlying belief was that God was the source of human wisdom, as he states in the first words of his book, "All wisdom comes from the Lord and with him it remains forever."

Both Moses and Ben Sira teach that keeping God's commandments is a choice that people can freely exercise. They have free will to choose between fire and water, life and death, good and evil, and they face the consequences of their choices. In wisdom, God sets before all humanity such decisions, and promises life for making right

choices. For Moses and Sirach, *life* refers to the life that each person experiences on this earth, daily life with all the mundane ups and downs in which the mighty and all-seeing God is always present.

Throughout Sirach's teaching, similar to that of other sages, is the emphasis on fear of the Lord. Those who fear God act with awe and reverence, and they recognize their dependence on God. They are trusting and humble, and are thus inclined to choose obedience to God's commandments, resulting in God's gift of life.

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

Proclaim with authority.

Pay attention to the commas. Take your time.  
Do not rush.

Use strong volume.

Pause. Smile as you proclaim wonderful  
news!

There are several teaching moments in this  
Gospel. Proclaim with a tone of authority.  
Take your time. Put expression in your voice.

## READING II 1 Corinthians 2:6–10

### A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

We **speak** a wisdom to those who are mature,  
not a wisdom of **this** age,  
nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.  
**Rather**, we speak God's wisdom, **mysterious, hidden**,  
which God **predetermined** before the ages for **our** glory,  
and which **none** of the rulers of this age **knew**;  
or, if they had known it,  
they would **not** have **crucified** the **Lord** of glory.

But as it is written:

*What **eye** has not seen, and **ear** has not heard,  
and what has **not entered** the **human** heart,  
what God has prepared for those who love him,  
**this God** has revealed to **us** through the **Spirit**.*

For the Spirit **scrutinizes everything**, even the depths of God.

## GOSPEL Matthew 5:17–37

### A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

[Jesus said to his disciples:]

"Do **not think** that I have come to abolish the law  
or the prophets.

I have come **not** to abolish but to fulfill.

**Amen**, I say to you, until **heaven** and **earth** pass away,  
**not** the smallest **letter** or the smallest **part** of a letter  
will **pass** from the law,  
until all **things** have taken place. >>

**READING II** In his two letters to the Corinthians, Paul addresses an audience apparently attracted to the human wisdom promoted by skilled orators. Paul warns the young Christian community that both the wisdom and the rulers of this age are passing away, powerful and permanent as they appear. Another wisdom—hidden, mysterious, and predetermined by God—was unknown by the deluded rulers who crucified the Lord of glory. This is the wisdom that Paul preaches.

As he writes about the ignorance of those who crucified Christ, Paul declares

that if they had known, they would not have crucified him. Similarly, in a speech attributed to Paul in Acts of the Apostles, he says that the Jerusalem rulers did not understand the prophets read to them every Sabbath (Acts 13:27). And from the cross, Jesus himself asks for forgiveness for them, "for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Relying on human wisdom, the rulers and those who followed them did not see or understand the divine wisdom revealed in Jesus crucified.

On their own, people lack the capacity to comprehend this paradoxical mystery.

Only God's revelation, poured out through the Spirit, opens eyes, ears, and hearts. This revealed wisdom is so new and contrary to common perceptions that Paul will continue to expound on it in the verses following today's reading. He explains that what he preaches has not been taught by human wisdom, but was given to him by the Spirit of God. What he preaches appears as foolishness to those without the Spirit, but Paul is preaching "the mind of Christ."