

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #134

READING I Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

A reading from the Book of Wisdom

The wicked say:

Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us;

he sets himself against our doings,

reproaches us for transgressions of the law

and charges us with violations of our training;

Let us see whether his words be true;

Let us find out what will happen to him.

For if the just one be the son of God, God will defend him

and deliver him from the hand of his foes.

With revilement and torture let us put the just one to the test

that we may have proof of his gentleness

and try his patience.

Let us condemn him to a shameful death;

for according to his own words, God will take care of him.

Make sure everyone is settled before you

begin. It is important that the assembly

hears the opening line, which explains that

the reading is told from the perspective of

the wicked.

beset = harass or threaten

reproaches = riH-PROCH-uhz

This is a malicious plan to test God.

The last line is taunting and insincere.

The speaker doesn't care and doesn't

believe God will take care of the just one.

For meditation and context:

READING I

In an attempt to instruct its audience about the challenges faced when striving after justice and righteousness, the author of the Book of Wisdom articulates a hypothetical reflection on justice from the perspective of those who are wicked or godless. The goal is to imagine how such people think about justice by indicating how they go about responding to those who seek it. The picture is unflattering, even intimidating for someone who would pursue justice and righteousness. For the wicked, the just and righteous ones maintain a commitment to

the law that calls forth the accountability of everyone—the just and unjust. That tending not simply with the just one's behavior and right thinking, but with his fundamental identity. They mean to condemn with the just one's status as a child of God. The contrast is stark and the picture disturbing. And while wisdom may present the wicked in a hypothetical way, the example of Christ's passion and death demonstrates the truth it reveals. At the same time, even the wicked recognize the confidence that underlies the gentleness of those who are just: God ultimately cares for them.

R. The Lord upholds my life.

O God, by your name save me,

and by your might defend my cause.

O God, hear my prayer;

hearken to the words of my mouth.

For the haughty have risen up against me,

for the ruthless seek my life;

they set not God before their eyes.

for its goodness.

I will praise your name, O Lord,

freely will I offer you sacrifice;

the Lord sustains my life.

Behold, God is my helper;

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 54:3-4, 5, 6 and 8 (6b)

READING II James 3:16—4:3

A reading from the Letter of Saint James

Beloved:

Where **jealousy** and **selfish** ambition exist, there is **disorder** and every foul practice. But the **wisdom from above** is first of all **pure**, then **peaceable**, **gentle**, **compliant**, full of **mercy** and good **fruits**, without **inconstancy** or **insincerity**. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in **peace** for those who **cultivate** peace.

Where do the wars

and where do the **conflicts** among you come from? Is it not from your **passions**

that make **war** within your members?

You **covet** but do not **possess**.

You **kill** and **envy** but you cannot **obtain**,

you **fight** and wage war.

You do not **possess** because you do not **ask**.

You ask but do not **receive**,

because you ask **wrongly**, to spend it on your **passions**.

This is a wisdom teaching.

Read the vices with a sad tone. Change to a peaceful countenance to recount the virtues. This will sharpen the distinction between the behavior of the wicked and that of the upright.

Wisdom is a gift from God, not simply the result of life experiences.

James uses rhetorical questions to begin this section on the ways of the wicked.

He describes sin from the abstract to the concrete. Read the accusatory questions, pause, and then continue with the ending that is heightened by the repeated use of the word "you."

READING II

Today's second reading from James continues to

attend to contrasts between those who are wicked and those who are wise. The wicked associate with envy and selfish ambition. By contrast, the wise enjoy a gift "from above." And the fruits of the wisdom that comes from above are ample, distinctive, and desirable. Wisdom begets purity, peace, gentleness, docility, mercy, goodness, consistency, and sincerity. It is a lengthy list of fruits worthy of meditation. But for James there is still more. Righteousness begets righteousness. As James puts

it, "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace."

Unfortunately, the wicked also reap what they sow. As James points out, for the wicked, conflicts and wars are born of their unintegrated desires, which he calls passions. These unholy longings of the wicked ultimately result in fruitlessness. They fight and desire to possess it. Their longings overtake them. Their energies get spent on fighting and waging war, and what they really want remains out of reach. Sadly, what they desire is only a request away. But the wicked are unable or unwilling to humbly ask for or openly receive what they desire. Accordingly, they are left to live with unmet desires. The contrast with the wise, who receive fruits in abundance, cannot be more pointed. Wisdom brings forth copious blessings; wickedness begets only war and conflict. Thus, the wise are praiseworthy models, while the wicked prove pitiable and in need of an antidote. And for that we must look to the Gospel.

GOSPEL Mark 9:30-37

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee,

but he did not wish anyone to know about it.

He was teaching his disciples and telling them,

"The Son of Man is to be handed over to men

and they will kill him,

and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise."

But they did not understand the saying,

and they were afraid to question him.

They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house,

he began to ask them,

"What were you arguing about on the way?"

But they remained silent.

They had been discussing among themselves on the way

who was the greatest.

Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them,

"If anyone wishes to be first,

he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."

Taking a child, he placed it in their midst,

and putting his arms around it, he said to them,

"Whoever receives one child such as this in my name,

receives me,

and whoever receives me,

receives not me but the One who sent me."

sits them down and shows them that to receive him, his teaching, and, ultimately, the One who sent him, they must employ the same gentleness and openness applied when embracing a child. The message becomes clear: fighting for God's grace is futile. Instead, fostering an open, docile spirit is the antidote to selfish ambition and wicked desires. Christ's way, the way of wisdom and holiness, means striving for meekness, not power. E.W.

silent. They seem to recognize that their greatest was not in keeping with their master's message or mission. They had been embodying the wickedness described in Wisdom and James. Their fighting and arguing made them unable to peaceably receive a new teaching from Jesus. They were rendered closed off by ambition and swallowed up by bickering. So, before he could meaningfully teach them about his coming suffering, death, and resurrection, he would have to rid them of their wickedness and selfish ambition. To do so, Jesus

Today's Gospel recalls Jesus' secret journey through Galilee in the northern part of the Holy Land. During this journey, he tries to teach his disciples that he must suffer, die, and rise, but they fail to understand him. Evidently, they were too preoccupied with concerns of their own grandeur to grasp his message. After all, what does suffering and death have to do with greatness? So, when they return to their home base in the village of Capernaum, Jesus asks them about the argument they were having during their journey. Like scolded children, they remain

GOSPEL

insert a comma after "not me."

Capernaum = kuh-PER-nee-^{*m} or kuh-PER-nay-^{*m} or kuh-PER-n-^{*m}
The change in geography indicates a new section. Pause slightly before starting.

Begin with an even, steady tone for the narrator.
Notice how Jesus teaches the disciples apart from everyone else. This is a hard teaching, and even his closest followers do not grasp its meaning yet.