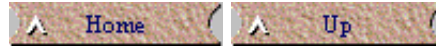


Proper 17



Prayer of the Day

O God, we thank you for your Son who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow his commands; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Proverbs 25:6-7

{6} Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great; {7} for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

Proverbs 25:1-29:27 are "proverbs of Solomon that the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah copied;" they have weight of Solomon's reputation behind them. "Hezekiah was the first Judean king since Solomon to reign without a rival king of Israel in the north, and he appears to have organized the assembling and uniting of historical, prophetic, poetical, and Wisdom materials from north and south." [1] Jesus models his advice in the Gospel on this proverb, one of Solomon's.

Or

Sirach 10:12-18

{12} The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord; the heart has withdrawn from its Maker. {13} For the beginning of pride is sin, and the one who clings to it pours out abominations. Therefore the Lord brings upon them unheard-of calamities, and destroys them completely. {14} The Lord overthrows the thrones of rulers, and enthrones the lowly in their place. {15} The Lord plucks up the roots of the nations, and plants the humble in their place. {16} The Lord lays waste the lands of the nations, and destroys them to the foundations of the earth. {17} He removes some of them and destroys them, and erases the memory of them from the earth. {18} Pride was not created for human beings, or violent anger for those born of women.

12. The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord: This stands in absolute opposition to Ben Sira's assertion in 1:14 that "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord" see Proverbs 1:7; 9:10. The wise are not proud, and the proud cannot be wise for they have abandoned the source of wisdom.

13c-17: God's judgment on the proud is devastating. The proud are overthrown and the lowly are elevated; powerful nations fall and weak ones take their place; we will not remember them.

18. Pride was not created for human beings: "Created...Ben Sira's term for divine intention, agency, and will.... The point is that God is not responsible for sin and its effects...." [2] He did not intend for human beings to be proud.

Psalms 112

{1} Praise the LORD! Happy are those who fear the LORD, who greatly delight in his commandments. {2} Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. {3} Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever. {4} They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous. {5} It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice. {6} For the righteous will never be moved; they will be remembered forever. {7} They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD. {8} Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes. {9} They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honor. {10} The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.

Psalms 112 is "A wisdom psalm so closely related in its alphabetical or acrostic structure and diction to the

preceding psalm that modern scholars find themselves in rare agreement when crediting both poems to the same psalmist." [3]

The Psalm describes the blessedness of those "who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his commandments. They are "a light for the upright," they "conduct their affairs with justice," they are not afraid of the darkness nor of evil tidings, they give to the poor. Political power, wealth, security and recognition as righteous will be their lot. They are triumph over their enemies, the wicked who hate their victory.

1. *Happy are those who fear the Lord*: Singular: "Happy is the one who fears the Lord."

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

{1} Let mutual love continue. {2} Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. {3} Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. {4} Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. {5} Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." {6} So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" {7} Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. {8} Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.... {15} Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. {16} Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

1-2. *mutual love...hospitality*: Fraternal love, *philadelphia*, is expressed in hospitality even to strangers.

2. *some have entertained angels without knowing it*: In Matthew 25:35-36 Jesus commends the practice of hospitality toward the needy stranger as hospitality toward himself. "The possibility of entertaining angels unawares is not put forward as a reason for practicing hospitality, but as a possible result," [4] as when the three men visited Abraham at Mamre, and it was Yahweh who was present (Genesis 18:1-2). Other occasions on which humans entertain angels are reported in Genesis 19:1ff; Judges 6:11ff; 13:3ff; Luke 1:11ff.

3. *Remember those who are in prison...those who are being tortured*: Not ordinary or common criminals, but those who are suffering for their Christian faith. Those who remember them are to identify with their sufferings. In Matthew 25 Jesus identifies himself with the hungry, thirsty, needy, imprisoned.

4: Sexual purity was one of the provisions of the decree of the Jerusalem council, together with abstinence from idols, from meat from animals that were strangled, and from eating blood (Acts 15:20). Fornication is condemned in the letters to Pergammum and Thyatira (Revelation 2:14, 20). In considering the prohibition of *porneia* in the Jerusalem Decree, Fitzmyer concludes that it is concerned with polygamy and divorce (Deuteronomy 17:17), and marriage within close degrees of kinship (Leviticus 18:13). [5]

5. *the love of money*: "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10).

be content with what you have: Because God has promised, "I will never leave you or forsake you," Christians are urged to be content with what they have.

6. *"The Lord is my helper..."*: A citation of Psalm 118:6 from the Septuagint.

8. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*: An affirmation of the unchanging nature of Christ, and of the continuity of his contemporary presence with his historical past.

15-16. *confess his name...share what you have*: Christians are to praise God both by vocal confession and by acts of goodness and charity.

Luke 14:1, 7-14

{1} On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.... {7} When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. {8} "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; {9} and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. {10} But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. {11} For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." {12} He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. {13} But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. {14} And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the

righteous."

1. the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath: The Pharisee treated Jesus as a social equal. But how he could consider Jesus religiously "clean," given Jesus associations with people who were unclean, is difficult to understand. Later (verses 13-14) Jesus makes clear the difference between his view of righteousness and that of the Pharisees.

[2-6: A story similar to the one in Luke 13:11-17 about a man with dropsy whom Jesus healed on the sabbath, except here the healing occurs in the home of a Pharisee.]

7-10: "Having been invited to a marriage feast, where does one sit? The lesson turns on the shame that one would experience if a later arrival with more status edges one into a less prestigious position." [6] Jesus' advice is to follow Solomon's wisdom in the Proverbs, don't get pushy, wait for the host to recognize you.

11: See also Luke 18:14, where the proverb explains why the tax collector was justified rather than the Pharisee. God sees the heart and recognizes honest repentance, but censures self-righteous pride. The inversion of honor is a constant motif in the Gospels.

12-13: While Jesus would no doubt, have been commended for his advice in the first instance, based on the wisdom of Solomon, in this case his counsel is contrary to the sensitivities of his host and fellow guests. Two issues are in play. First, the poor, the cripples, the lame and the blind, would have been suspect with respect to their purity, and would not have been considered appropriate guests for a Pharisee, while inviting them reflects Jesus' concern for the outcast. On the other hand, the host in the parable has been shamed by his guests, and when he turns their banquet over to people who are unworthy of the feast he insults them in turn, while laying up for himself treasure in heaven.

14: The maimed guests cannot reciprocate, so God will reciprocate for them "at the resurrection of the righteous."

Reflection

The lessons are concerned with how those who confess the resurrection of Jesus experience the power of the resurrection in their own lives. It is human nature to seek the recognition and respect of others, especially from those who are in a position to benefit us.

The proverb, the admonitions of Hebrews, and Jesus' advice about the seating at wedding banquets urge us to honor those whom others ignore. We are not to seek recognition for ourselves, but we are to know that God will take care of his own. If we are generous to those who are in need, give freely to the poor, and are just in our dealings, then we show ourselves to be gracious, merciful and righteous. We can be confident in the promise of the Lord's blessings. If we act out of pride or for self-advancement we can be sure that our efforts will come to nothing.

Hymns [7]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

269 --E--Awake, My Soul,
778s --E--Gather Us In (718v)
423 --D--Lord, Whose Love
711v --P--You Satisfy the (774s)
419 --II--Lord of All

561 --II--For the Beauty
429 --II--Where Cross the
778v --II--O Christ the
797v --II--O God Beyond
492, 510, 770s/754v, 370

Prayers of the People [8]

P or A: We are inclined to devote ourselves to the creations of human imagination, be it technology, politics, or economics. Inspire us instead to strive for the things of your making, which alone endure. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

A: That the world might recognize the blessing of turning to you and your plan for our lives. Inspire our

leaders to govern according to your will, that the human community might learn of your goodness. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

A: For married couples and those who prepare to vow love and fidelity to one another, that they may truly be as one--supporting one another in good times and in bad, and serving each other in love. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

A: For those who are sick and dying, that they would find healing and comfort. We pray for _____. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

A: That the people of this congregation may learn to live humbly in the knowledge that your saving grace is not a prize, but a gift. By the power of your Spirit, enable us to share this precious gift with our neighbours. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

P: Make us holy, O Lord, prepared to receive you into our lives in all that we do. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Or [9]

Presider or deacon

Invited to the wedding banquet, let us offer prayers for all those in danger and need.

Deacon or other leader

For our leaders who speak the word of God to us, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

For mercy, peace, and justice among all peoples.

For students and teachers, and all those returning to their studies.

For workers and their organizations, and for those who employ and manage them.

For farmers and abundant fruits of the earth, and for safety from violent storms.

For the sick and the suffering, those in prison and those being tortured, and all those in distress.

For hospitality to strangers, and for married persons and all in unions of love.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

Lifting our voices with all creation, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

God of bread and wine, hear the prayers we offer this day, gather us at your banquet table, and inspire us to honor you and one another, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes

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[1] R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965, p. 155.

[2] Burton Mack, notes to Sirach in *The HarperCollins Study Bible*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, p. 1547.

[3] Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970, p. 127.

[4] Hugh Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964, p. 239.

[5] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 191997, pp. 557 f.

[6] K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998, p. 75.

[7] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[8] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_c.txt

[9] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>

