



Hope sustains us through Wisdom reinforcing the gospel.

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In a time when we are very anxious as a country, a society and even individuals, it may be good to reflect upon “Wisdom Literature.” The Wisdom Books make up a large section of our present Bible. Though pagan in origin, God’s people adapted them for teaching virtue and reinforcing belief in the divine. . The Wisdom stories supporting the gospel offer a great deal of hope; hope in the conversion of sinners, hope in the fact that Jesus himself had, and will continue, to find some good in every human heart.

One favored gospel story in what has become known as ‘Luke’s theology’ is the one where Jesus goes out of his way to greet, and encourage the conversion of Zacchaeus, who, as a tax collector, wears a label of rich man and thus an irreformable sinner. The invitation to repent and accept Jesus’ word was not welcomed among the leaders of the time. Only the poor, the sinners and outcasts of society were eager for – and open to – Jesus’ instruction. And, it excited them for it said that nothing, and certainly no person, is so completely bad as to be beyond the reach of God’s grace.

Wisdom literature -- so revealing of God’s love -- by offering inspiration and encouragement, is an example of how God builds on nature. The foundation of this literature is the recognition of the Divine, there is good to be found in all creation. It addresses the Divine. “for you love all things that are, and loathe nothing that you have created. If you hated anything, you would not have made it.”(Wis.10:22-11;)

Contrast this attitude with those of the Thessalonians who, in anticipating the second coming of Jesus, abandoned any genuine concern for the world in which they lived. Thessalonians is among the earliest letters produced by Paul, spanning a period in which Paul was anticipating the second coming of Jesus in his lifetime. For too many Thessalonians this expectation encouraged abandonment of genuine concern for the world in which they lived to concentrate on the world that was to come. This led to the neglect of human responsibility to take charge of God’s world and develop its potential for good. To ignore this God-given responsibility spawned a lack of involvement for overcoming evil, and less concern for those on the fringes of society.

So it is better to reflect on the story of Zacchaeus, in “Wisdom Literature”. He was not only a tax collector, but the chief tax collector who lined his own pockets with money and aided the enemy, Rome’s army of occupation. The well-known Luke story tells of Zacchaeus climbing a sycamore tree to view Jesus, but remain out of sight of the threatening crowd. The surprise is not only that Jesus spotted this small, hidden man, but actually invited himself to spend the night at Zacchaeus’ house, thus leading to the conversion.. This Lucan principle of finding good in the most hopeless circumstances leads us to believe in conversion rather than condemnation, what God intended for everyone from the very beginning of creation. Of this, we remember the words of Jesus as offered to Nicodemus: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.”

Total condemnation of the world amounts to a denial of the mystery of the Incarnation, that Jesus would assume his human nature to search out and find those who otherwise might be lost. There is no reason why this world of creation cannot experience its connection with God’s love and creative activity, following the path of the disciples who continued the work so effectively begun by Jesus himself.