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 When we read any book of Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament, we listen softly and slowly to each word, as we would listen to the words of a good poem. Many subjects are pondered in its pages of the sage’s thoughts. The writings relate life’s experiences to the designs of the Creator God. There are few direct answers to many of life’s questions. There are provocative promptings to our coming personally to a more familiar relationship with the God of mystery.

 *“God did not make death, nor does He rejoice in the destruction of the living. For He fashioned all things that they might have being… By the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in the devil’s possession experience it.”*

The question is about death and the presence of evil in the God-created world. *“If God is so good, why is there so much suffering and death?”* There are several faith-statements inserted, but no easy answers. The blood-red angers of humankind, the neanderthal indifferences, the offhand violence and programmed cowardice—these are attributed to an envious superbeing of cosmic proportions. Envy is the word to watch. Envy is the work of the devil. Spite and jealousy fill the air. It leads to death for those who experience its deadly fruit. The spirit of this Wisdom reading rests on the belief that God creates good. Evil is envious of that goodness, and those who live in the tension between gratitude and envy make a choice.

*“God did not make man imperishable; He made him in the image of His own nature,”* which is life itself and cannot *“know death.”* But God respects our freedom to make choices, and we chose to experience life on our terms, expecting to be full masters of our self and of our world. *“We will be like gods,”* eyes open right now, *“knowing good and evil.”* We wanted to know the good of coming to life on earth, and the mystery of coming to an end, expecting to master even that end.

Our life now has, as a consequence, we have a beginning and a middle, and an end. *“For dust you are,”* by our own choice, *“and to dust you shall return.”* Unlike the other creatures, we have chosen death. Now the real helplessness in us appears. We were absolutely to live forever, and all we now know how to do is to die. For the New Testament preaches that in Jesus a new wisdom has appeared, one which cuts the argument short and ends general recriminations.

First, it accepts the terms in which it has inherited the issue: it pictures Jesus as locked in a temporal combat with a Prince of Evil, and Jesus as ever victorious. If there is such an instigator of evil, some one responsible on a radical, cosmic level for the woes of humankind, the New Testament presents Jesus as an equally cosmic, more radical force for good. People do not need to feel dominated and possessed by their miserable vices. All this is achieved when St Paul says in today’s Epistle, *“You are well acquainted with the favor shown you by our Lord Jesus Christ: how for your sake He made Himself poor though He was rich, so that you might become rich by His poverty.”* St Paul is proposing an action by God’s Son so awesome that no power of evil can touch it. If God has done *this,* then let there be no more foolish talk about the inevitable power of evil.

Also, the New Testament invites us to watch what Jesus does. Last Sunday we saw the power of Jesus to calm the winds and the waves. The Apostles came to Jim in their desperate need. In today’s Gospel, two persons come in similar conditions of fearful need: Jairus’ daughter is sick. While Jesus and the crowd are on the way, a woman who is ill and desperate for a cure, reaches out to touch His clothing.

Storms, illness, and now, death become the tension for Jesus’ loving, calming touch. These three scenes begin the long display within St Mark’s Gospel, that Jesus is Lord of all creation. His dominion is for the living of life more freely as it was originally created. Jesus is doing His work of bringing life back to real life. Jesus loves them the way He finds them. Loves them enough not to leave them the way He has found them.

No grandiose cosmic drama here. Jesus heals this person, then that one. His cures are simple and comfortable. They imply power, as we see it, but the power comes forth from Him in modest ways. Jesus credits His Father at all points with good will. Jesus expresses wisdom in taking on one part of human life after another.

New Testament wisdom remains a paradox: it tells us on one hand that it is foolish not to see that in Jesus, evil’s day is over; on the other hand, it tells us that we must be delivered from evil on a daily basis. Above all, it tells us that the truly wise ones are those who share with the poor, and comfort the sick.

Our celebration of faith and our participation in the eucharist is the remembering of who we are by His saving grace. We have listened and have discerned. Jesus, our Lord and our God, frees us to arise, to go forth and live real lives. The presence of Christ within you makes for peace and all good, and makes you more aware of the people around you, those with whom you exchange life on so many levels, realizing it was not so much you, as Christ-within-you.

