

Trinity 11, Year A
03 August 2008

Evensong

1 Kings 10:1-13
Acts 13:1-13

How to put these lessons together?

Old Testament

- QoS: queen of the south, young woman of Song of Songs
- QoS to Solomon = gentile to anointed one, Metaphor for Christ and Church
- Sheba's chastity depicted as a foreshadowing of VM
- and the three gifts that she brought (gold, spices, and gems) have been seen as analogous to the gifts of the Magi: Isaiah 60:6; *And they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring forth gold and incense*
- Koran – QoS converted to Abrahamic monotheism
- Maybe just in praise of Wisdom

Wisdom

Proverbs 8:25 with God at creation, material out of which we are made

Proverbs 8:31 something lovely about a well-ordered enterprise, the order that adherence to the precepts of Lady Wisdom can bring.

intimately linked to Yahweh's life and being.

In Job 28, wisdom is hidden. Mortals do not know the way to wisdom: only God understands it.

In Proverbs, Yahweh makes it accessible to mortals: in fact, the love that God bears for creation makes God want the best for us, so Wisdom is available to all who will heed it.

Song of Songs is the final step with (apparently) no mention of Yahweh, though many commentators have assumed that Yahweh is one of the participants in the action.

Wisdom was present at creation (Proverbs 8:30), frolicking amongst creation should have been translated *little child* or *architect*?

Wisdom provides the correct understanding of the world, an understanding needed to please God and succeed.

Wisdom is intermediate between God and creation, and the relationship between humanity and Wisdom is an image of the relationship between Yahweh and Wisdom.

Wisdom delights in humanity as Yahweh delights in her, this shift evident in Proverbs 8:30-31: focus progresses from Wisdom before Yahweh to humanity before Wisdom.

Wisdom mediatrix between Yahweh and humanity, 'linking the enigmatic divine world with the tangible world.'

Wisdom is Mary?

Wisdom stands for the fullness of life promised by the sages to those who follow in her way (Proverbs 8:35), the author framing her 'against the background of Israel's sad history by the sexual emphasis Wisdom has assumed the burden of the covenant, fidelity to the Lord, in language reflecting the old struggle so mercilessly bared in the book of Hosea and elsewhere.'

There is no personification in the Old Testament that compares with that of Wisdom. Justice and peace may kiss, alcohol is a rowdy, but 'only Wisdom is given a voice that resembles the Lord's'.

Wisdom and the Holy Spirit are all but equated in the Wisdom of Solomon

Tertullian: identifies sophia with the second person of the Trinity.

Origen puts *Wisdom* before *Word* (JC)

Schleiermacher: the principle which orders and determines the world for the divine self-imparting which is evinced in redemption.

Bulgakov: wisdom's energy = essence of Godhead: the nature of God (which is in fact *sophia*) is a living and, therefore, loving substance, ground, and "principle."

Bulgakov: *sophia* is love of love.

Marketplace, Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly

The one leads to death, the other to life, a contrast make all the more vividly in chapter 9.

This is why **we need discernment**

Dublin

Tom seemed well enough, but asked me questions that implied he thought I was flailing around in life ever since I left Dublin. I was flailing around well before that, in fact I think it's the authentic human condition for those who look outside themselves and look back into themselves.

So on we go. Just when we think we're getting the hang of it, something happens to disturb our complacency.

Second lesson

The missionary call of Barnabas and Saul records a problem that bothers many Christians: How to recognize the guidance of God, how to know the directions of life, and to find the will of the Holy Spirit in these matters?

Up to this time Paul has never acted as an apostle. A Teacher. Perhaps the most important thing about this section is that here is found a revelation of the manner of the leading of the Spirit, how the Spirit of God guides his people.

The first three verses set the scene for the call of the Holy Spirit.

Some had the gift of prophecy, and others had the gift of teaching. In Greek it is clear that there were three prophets and two teachers. The first three are prophets: Barnabas, Symeon, and Lucius. Then there were two teachers: Manaen, a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, a foster brother of Herod.

Here is a collection of people from all walks of life who made up the church: a black man, or perhaps, two blacks; a man from the island of Cyprus, Barnabas. With them was Saul of Tarsus. He is not called an apostle, he is not even a prophet; he is a teacher in the church at Antioch. At this point in his career, the only gift that had become manifest in his life was that wonderful ability he had to teach the Word of God. Now while these men were performing their gifts, busy doing what God had equipped them to do in the church, the Spirit of God spoke to them.

That is very significant.

There are many people I find today who are looking to God to lead them in some dramatic way.
cave?
mountain?
expect the dramatic?

Maybe, but often, as in this lesson, the call comes when one is busy exercising his gift where he is, just as here. These men were busy employing their gifts, and, in the midst of their activity, the call of the Spirit came.

You can steer a ship or a car if it is moving, but it is very difficult to steer it when it is sitting still. God loves to see people at work at what they know to do, and then he will give them further direction.

Intellect

God moves folk to do things, we choose what we do based on where we are
The Spirit did not tell them to go to Cyprus; that was the choice of Saul and Barnabas. The Spirit told them to move out, but the men decided where to go.,
As Paul put it, "work out your own salvation [solutions]; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his pleasure," {Phil 2:12-13 RSV}. Responsibility. Talents. Make the most of what you've been given.

Evos waiting for direction like robots, automatons, ruled by computer-impulses which come from the Spirit. This devalues intellect, ratiocination.
Ratzinger.

Paul and Barnabas had no idea that they would be able to have a hearing before the governor of the island, the proconsul, the man placed there by the Roman senate and responsible for the control and governance of the whole island. But that man, prompted by the Holy Spirit, though he was a pagan Roman, sent for Paul and Barnabas, and asked them to speak to him the words of truth.

You can never anticipate how the Holy Spirit is going to work things out. But Paul and Barnabas came and began to preach to the governor.

This is the beginning then of the great ministry of the Apostle Paul, expressed through the power of his

teaching. That was what impressed the proconsul.

So discernment, wisdom: with each step, the next one becomes a bit clearer. if we try and stay where we are, we shrivel up and die. Something here about church:

Change but no change.

We have to take steps.

For me too

is this the right job? I don't know. But I'll never find out unless I take steps to find out.

Our journey *through* life is, in fact, a call to journey *into* Life - into fullness of life, which God has opened to us through Jesus the Christ. If we are open to be led by His light, then - like the Magi of old - we shall find ourselves on a journey that forces us to take risks and that will radically change us, from inside out.

We ask about change: is it right for me?

My pride starts agonising. But here is this opportunity: Ezekiel: eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it: stop moaning and get on with it.

Let the holy spirit speak to us: be ready to listen to that still small voice. Stop yabbering on and try to listen.

In this journey, we don't know what the future has in store. Bunyan

Christian said to Evangelist, Whither must I fly? Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder Wicket-gate? The Man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining Light? He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that Light in your eye, and go up directly thereto: so shalt thou see the Gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.

Do you see yonder shining Light? He said, I think I do.

That's as much as we can hope for.