

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Intense Drama Conflict Fourth Week of Lent Friday, March 16, 2018 8:15 AM
Wis 2:1a, 12-22; Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30 (Are the forces of our world today, rooted deeply as they are, really more observant of true justice?)

The readings this morning are a little bit problematic; for example, it says here: **“So they tried to arrest him, but no one laid a hand upon him.”**

I don't know what sort of attempt this was, but the point is that the **drama** of Christ in his encounter with the official hierarchy of his day is getting, you might say, **more intense**. On the one hand, he is **trying to avoid conflict**; but on the other hand, **he is standing up for who he is; and who he is, is the Son of God**. Now that terminology people say is something the Jews could never possibly accept; that's one reason why they rejected him. But that isn't true because in the first reading in the **Book of Wisdom the just man is called “son of God.”** So that terminology was present in the thinking of the tradition, and it was not so odd, and it was not so impossible to believe.

Now real conflicts had nothing to do with terminology or what Jesus is claiming, but rather it had to do with the fact that **Jesus** wanted something different. He **wanted a radical change**. He was against the status quo in the sense that **he didn't see the status quo truly worshiping God**. He didn't see it as truly doing what God wanted, **and he was not afraid to say so**.

Now in this reading from Wisdom it's about how **evil people plot against the just**. And of course evil people don't think the way that they are portrayed in this story. They don't actually think that way, but what the story is saying it's equivalent to what they think because although they won't put it that way, that's really what they are doing. **They are putting justice on trial**. They may not admit it, but actually just people threaten them. **The wicked are actually threatened by justice, as the unholy are threatened by holiness**—they really are because they see something,

even if they don't admit it consciously, they see something that they could be and they know, at least unconsciously, that **they are selling themselves short**.

So what might be very attractive to one person who is striving for goodness or virtue or holiness actually is embarrassing and threatening to someone who is not striving, who has really given up any attempt to really be authentic, holy, good, just. And that's really the drama that both the Book of Wisdom and John are trying to develop for us. It's a drama between **Jesus** who is coming in simplicity of heart and total sincerity, a gift from the Father, who then **threatens just by his very existence those who have given up trying to really serve God, but who have substituted something that actually had deep roots in the society and institutions of that time**. That's why the drama becomes so intense because the forces are very powerful.

Now the question we might ask ourselves: **Has anything changed? Are the forces of our world today, rooted deeply as they are, really more observant of true justice? Are they really any more intentional of service of God? Are we therefore truly a threat to them, or do they see us as complicit?**