

still waters

home church studies

Psalm 1

[Worship]

1 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; 2 but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. 3 They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Consider: Peter B. Price

[Words]

"Anyone who is wise or understanding among you should from a good life give evidence of deeds done in the gentleness of wisdom" (James 3:13). The importance of understanding our faith and the behavior that grows from such faith is the keynote of today's scriptures.

Both James and Mark provide evidence to their readers of how "wars and battles between yourselves first start" (James 4:1; Mark 9:34). Ambition and the desire for status are strong within the Christian community. Jesus recognized this and took his disciples away from the crowds in order to re-educate them about the true nature of power and its destructiveness, prophesying his own end. "But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him," says Mark, in a commentary that could apply just as much to our times (9:32).

When I was a parish priest, people would occasionally say, "We need more teaching." Rather tartly I would reply, "It is not more teaching that we need but more learning!" The psalmist pictures a tree planted by a stream being nurtured from its roots by the life-giving water as a parable of how we need to learn God's wisdom. In this idyllic pastoral scene, there is a profound truth; we need solitude as much as we need company in learning God's ways. When we are nurtured like this we are enabled to "bear fruit" and

to watch "every project succeed" that is borne out of "the gentleness of wisdom."

The eulogy of the "wise woman" in Proverbs gives us a picture of well-ordered humanity. Wisdom literature always offers a hidden message. Here, "wisdom" is synonymous with the Spirit, which in the Old Testament is usually feminine. The picture of the "orderly woman" is of a Spirit-ordered world in which hands are held out to the poor and arms to the needy (Proverbs 31:20). This is the true nature of the "wisdom that comes down from above": It is "essentially something pure; it is also peaceable, kindly, and considerate, full of mercy—it shows itself by doing good" (James 3:17).



Reflection and Action

How do you take time to learn God's ways? Where have you witnessed or experienced ambition and status seeking? How does your life demonstrate "evidence of deeds done in the gentleness of wisdom"?

[Scripture]

James 3.13-4.3, 7-8a

3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. 15 Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. 16 For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. 4:1 Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? 2 You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.