

## **Homily For Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent - Year II**

### **St Peter's 8:30 am Mass - March 15, 2024**

**Wisdom 2:1,12-22** "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man."

**Psalm 34:16-22** "The face of the Lord is against evildoers."

**John 7:1,2,10,25-30** "No one laid hands on him because his hour had not yet come."

### **Not Time Yet**

#### **Introduction**

Up until very recent times there have been primarily three groups of people with respect to religious belief. There are those who believe in God and practice faith. There are those who believe but don't practice faith. And, in the last couple of centuries, but especially in the last fifty years, a growing number of atheists. That last group is quite worrisome because no culture in history has had significant numbers of people who believe that there is no intelligent creating God. The explosion of scientific inquiry and discovery has suggested to people that we can know all there is to know by the powers of human intellect and examination of the natural world.

An even more troubling trend in western culture in recent times is a very fast growing group who don't care if there is a God or not. It's irrelevant to their lives. With atheists, at least one could argue with them. They are always ready to try to disprove Christian belief especially. The new group apathetic. They could not care less about the arguments for or against God. Someone coined the term for them 'apatheists'.

#### **John**

Our picture of Jesus and his time suggests to us that there were no atheists and no apatheists, but there were identifiable groups of people based on their openness to him. Some had places in their hearts for what God was doing in the world. They may have been confused by Jesus but their longing for the Saviour made their hearts ready to receive him. But the reason he was hated and then crucified is not because they were atheists or apatheists. They just wanted God to

be like them. A God who enters directly into his own creation as a human being? Ridiculous. By the way, that is reason for the angel rebellion from the beginning. God must never lower himself to such base and limited creatures such as us. Satan would not accept it. He's no atheist, and he is definitely not apathetic. You can bet he cares. He knows God and he hates God.

Satan tried everything in the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert. He tempted Jesus with everything he could imagine might entice him not to pursue God's love and care for his creatures who had gone astray like sheep. It did not work then, but he was not done attempting to deceive those creatures about Jesus.

As the people come face to face with Jesus, there are misunderstandings and presumptions about who He is, how He will or will not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies and what He will accomplish. Assumptions and judgments lead to frustration and anger. So it is in every age: confusion over faith in Christ and Church teaching sparks controversy and religious disintegration.

There was a question about where Jesus came from. Two traditions regarding the birth and origin of the Messiah circulated in ancient Judaism. One is that he would be manifested to the world only as an adult. The other is that he would come from Bethlehem in accordance with the prophecy in Chapter 5 of the prophet Micah. In today's Gospel we reflect on the confusion about the identity and the origin of Jesus Christ. "Can it be that this is the Messiah? But when he comes, no one will know where he is from."

The irony is that both are true of Jesus. He has a human origin in Bethlehem and he did grow up in Nazareth in Galilee in a very human way. But before that, His heavenly origin is in the Trinity. Jesus responds to their doubt by declaring that he comes from God. His knowledge and his words are about heavenly things.

John is very clear that Jesus is in charge of the situation where they want to arrest him. But no one touches him because, as John says: "Because his hour had not yet come." The time had not yet come for Him to fully reveal His identity and mission. That would happen only through the cross, through what looked like Satan's victory.

## **Wisdom**

Chapter Two of the Book of Wisdom describes for us a stunningly accurate image of the righteous man who is “inconvenient” to the wicked because he “opposes their actions” and who “professes to have knowledge of God and calls himself a child of the Lord.” It goes on: “His manner of life is unlike that of others.” Right there in the ancient Book of Wisdom, already this man who will be an inconvenience is from God who is “father.” We can look at this in Sacred Scripture and be in awe of how accurately Jesus is predicted so many years earlier.

The wicked of that day are already preparing for his entry into salvation history: “Let us test him with insult and torture so that we may find out how gentle he is and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death.” On and on it goes describing almost exactly what the wicked will do to the saviour, the one from God, who takes on all sin, all wickedness on himself. Hear the wording. This is fantastic and applies so much for us today. Jesus is inconvenient because he contradicts the atheists and he stirs up the apathetic.

## **Call To Conversion**

Holy Week is very soon. But, for this moment, late in the fourth week of Lent, those who are ready to walk with Jesus will once again be plunged into the mystery of how and why the Son of God is killed by the wicked who hate God and by those who refuse to be stirred from their apathy. People of faith may cry out with Peter: “Lord this must not happen to you.” But Jesus will long to go to the cross for those who would believe and those who would be stirred up. Listen to his heart: “There is a baptism with which I must be baptized and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished!”

This is such a disturbing time for us. We are overwhelmed by the number of ways Satan lies to people everywhere. But God always overcomes the lies. God always acts in ways that astound us. That is why Jesus, from the cross, will forgive the atheists, the apatheists, and the confused. He died for them as he died for the believers. What a faith we have. What a God we have. What a saviour. What a mystery we must embrace once again this year and this moment.