

The Good and the True
Homily for April 1, 2022

St John Chrysostom (who lived the 4th century) in reflecting on today's Gospel reading wrote:

“ to live a life of virtue can dispose one to see the truth. Since God is both the Good and the True, doing the good and knowing the truth are intimately related: knowing the truth leads us to act well, and acting well helps us to know the truth.”¹

In the interaction between Jesus and the crowd who have gathered in Jerusalem for the 8 Day Festival of Tabernacles, where the faithful reenacted the dessert journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, there is a stubbornness they express. They claim to have Jesus figured out and because they know where he is from they conclude he cannot be the Messiah. At the time of Jesus there was a common belief that when the Messiah came, no one would know where he came from, he would appear suddenly from no one knew where.

But Jesus challenges their assumption when he says you really do not know where I am from. Yes Nazareth is my home but I have come from the Father and that is my true origin. Listen again to how he puts it:

You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. ²⁹ I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.”²

Jesus' response can also be translated as a question: “You know me, and you know where I come from?” (RSV).¹⁰ Taken in this way, Jesus asks a rhetorical question that confronts their disbelief: “You think you know where I come from, but really you don't.”³

This is the case for so many people who for any number of reasons choose to reject Jesus or are indifferent to him. But conversely when we come to see the truth of who Jesus is more fully then it can have a profound influence on how we live because in knowing the one who is the truth influences the way we live.

Such is the theme also expressed in the Old Testament reading but here it is presented in the negative. Those who are speaking are people who reject the goodness and truthfulness of the godly man, and they do everything they can to undermine him, to the point of torturing him and putting him to a cruel death. This story is an anticipation of the conflict between the Jewish authorities and Jesus and their colluding with the Romans to kill Jesus.

¹ Martin, F., & Wright, W. M., IV. (2015). [The Gospel of John](#) (P. S. Williamson & M. Healy, Eds.; p. 143). Baker Academic.

² [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Jn 7:28–29). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

³ Martin, F., & Wright, W. M., IV. (2015). [The Gospel of John](#) (P. S. Williamson & M. Healy, Eds.; p. 142). Baker Academic.

The Book of Wisdom then comments on the folly of the wicked by showing that the godly man who lives in the truth will in the end be commended and rewarded. Notice the contrast:

For their wickedness blinded them and they did not know the secret purposes of God, nor hoped for the wages of holiness, nor discerned the prize for blameless souls.

Notice who when the heart is bent on a way contrary to God it leads to blindness that makes God's purposes hidden. They are not secret in that they are unknowable, but there needs to a disposition of heart that is receptive to know God. As we come to a deepening awareness of God's loving goodness towards us then the invitation to live a holy life is something that is rewarding. Remember how it is stated: The wages of holiness result in the ultimate prize of knowing and seeing God, which is the fulfillment of all desire for blameless souls. What is a blameless soul? One that is being made perfect by God as we cooperate with his grace. The more open we are to affirming we belong to Jesus, will in turn helps us to know the truth of his love and live out of that love lives that are both good and true.