

FEBRUARY 23, 2017 THURSDAY

Reading 1 SIR 5:1-8

Rely not on your wealth; say not: "I have the power." Rely not on your strength in following the desires of your heart. Say not: "Who can prevail against me?" or, "Who will subdue me for my deeds?" for God will surely exact the punishment. Say not: "I have sinned, yet what has befallen me?" for the Most High bides his time. Of forgiveness be not overconfident, adding sin upon sin. Say not: "Great is his mercy; my many sins he will forgive." For mercy and anger alike are with him; upon the wicked alights his wrath. Delay not your conversion to the LORD, put it not off from day to day. For suddenly his wrath flames forth; at the time of vengeance you will be destroyed. Rely not upon deceitful wealth, for it will be no help on the day of wrath.

Responsorial Psalm PS 1:1-2, 3, 4 AND 6

R. (40:5a) Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Blessed the man who follows not
the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the company of the insolent,
But delights in the law of the LORD
and meditates on his law day and night.
R. Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

He is like a tree
planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves never fade.
Whatever he does, prospers.
R. Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Not so the wicked, not so;
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
For the LORD watches over the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked vanishes.
R. Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

Alleluia 1 THES 2:13

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Receive the word of God, not as the word of men,
but as it truly is, the word of God.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel MK 9:41-50

Jesus said to his disciples: "Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, where *their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched*. "Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if salt becomes insipid, with what will you restore its flavor? Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another."

Reflection:

We have here a chain of Jesus' sayings that were probably well-known in the early Church. We find some traces of them in the Sermon on the Mount. Mark may be using these sayings to warn people that simple Christians, or even new converts to Christianity, need to be helped in their faith formation and not be scandalized. There are vivid images used here, concerning bodily limbs and the harsh treatment they will be subjected to if they are a cause of scandal. The expressions are an example of Hebrew hyperbole. The point made is that no sacrifice is big enough when it is a question of building up the community of Christ.