

Thirty-first Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle C

Wisdom 11:22-12:2

Psalm 145

II Thes 1:11-2:2

Lk 19: 1-10

Edward J. Enright, O.S.A.

“I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.” So we refrain in response to the reading from the *Book of Wisdom* 11:22-12:2. Someone might ask, “Why would we, in a world so messed up with war, famine, and so many other categories of disaster, praise God, and worse still, address God under such a title as king?” God would seem to be so absent, that God’s existence could easily be doubted. And, to address this God as king would suggest someone in charge of this crazy world, or even if in charge, so many rulers of our day perpetrate such incredible inhumanities against their own people and threaten the lives of millions beyond their own borders, that naming God “king” would seem to be an insult of the greatest magnitude.

People of faith, however, know that God not only exists, but that God is very much in charge and can be called a king. This is so, not in terms of human ways, but in the most intimately gracious ways found in God’s Word today. In the *Book of Wisdom*, after comparing the immensity of God with creation described as a seemingly insignificant “grain from a balance/or a drop of morning dew,” the author verbs God’s powerful, but deep and caring involvement in our world, which is clearly understood as God’s own world. Of course, God’s own world is not the distorted landscape that we humans in our sinfulness have created, because we failed to take seriously our responsibility as co-creators and co-care-takers handed over to us by our Creator. *Wisdom*’s author reminds us that God has mercy on all creation, human and natural, because God “can do all things.” The rhetoric of this reading is so beautiful, it cannot fail to move anyone sensitive to our relationship with God and our fellow creatures. *Wisdom*’s author says of God, that God overlooks our sins in order to give us the opportunity to repent; loves everything that exists and loathes nothing that God has made, because God cannot hate what God has fashioned; wills and preserves and calls forth all that exists; spares all of creation because it belongs to God, whom the author calls “Lord and lover of souls,” who is to be found in all of creation. Creation, human and natural, becomes the sacraments of God’s inescapable presence. We cannot get rid of God no matter how hard we try in our sinfulness. And it is precisely because God wants us to be more and more the sacraments of God’s presence to others that God calls us little by little, rebuking and warning and reminding us, says *Wisdom*, so that we can turn to the merciful and compassionate God, whom Jesus, in the *Gospel of Luke*, proclaims as he enters into the house of Zacchaeus, the tax collector, who was lost, but Jesus found. God does not give up on us, but as the second *Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians* reveals, makes the repentant “worthy of his calling” and powerfully brings “to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith.”

Since God “is faithful in all his words and holy in all his works,” lifting up “all who are falling” and raising up “all who are bowed down,” we can this day and every day, and particularly in the celebration of the Eucharist, praise God’s name forever, addressing God as king.