

February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – dcn. joe schmitt  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Cycle A

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Sirach 15:15 - 20

*God gives us the freedom to choose and act responsibly.*

Psalms 119:1 – 2, 4 – 5, 17 – 18, and 33 – 34.

*Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 1 Corinthians 2: 6 – 10.

*God's wisdom is only for the spiritually mature.*

Gospel: Matthew 5: 20 – 22a, 27 – 28, 33 – 34a, 37. (shorter form)

*God is calling us to choose a life beyond the law, a life based on love.*

“Choose Life, act with Love”

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.

We continue this Sunday for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in a row with Matthew's famous “Sermon on the Mount”, and we will hear from it yet again next week. I proclaimed the shortened version of today's Gospel because it had enough in it to get the main point, and when I was talking with my spiritual director this week and expressing my troubles with this reading; he asked me, “Are you going to preach on it all?” I responded, “Not if I ever want to do this again!” Then he said, “Why read it?” to which I replied, “Good point!”

As a general rule, if you pay attention to it, the Hebrew Scripture reading and the Gospel usually have some direct correlation. That is certainly true today. Sirach, a wise Jewish sage who is thought to have served God in the early decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century before the birth of Jesus, reflects today on the final teaching of Moses to the Israelites before they entered the promise land. It's kind of a treatise on the choices put before each of us in order to live a good / holy life: “Fire, water, life, death, good, bad – pick one and you will have it. Just remember God's wisdom is great; God's strength, massive; God's surveillance, continuous and extensive.” For Sirach, life is a series of choices in which we select what leads to God, or to destruction. We have God's laws as a guide in the choosing. So armed with this knowledge we choose. Our God is an awesome God!

Paul in the letter to the Corinthians adds that God's wisdom is very mysterious; it goes into the interior of God's purposes. We won't find it on the surface. It is not in the latest message, but more like the oldest – what God determined as the way to bring out God's best in each one of us. Paul also reminds us famously that no one has seen, or even imagined anything like this – what God has arranged for those who love God. Our God is an awesome God.

In this section of the Beatitudes, Jesus is instructing us on how we can be the “salt” and “light” he spoke about last week: by using God's commandments as the guide to our choices. It's not the letter of the law that is important but the intent; so we must search our hearts for the “love” in every situation and not let our egos, our preferences, our prejudices get in the way. This is stuff for mature people, willing to let go and let God in the name of being loving toward those less fortunate than ourselves. As Pope Francis has stated on more than one occasion, “We have been called to form consciences, not replace them.” (*Amoris Laetitia*, #37) Blessed are those who can do this, for they have no idea, not an inkling, of what our God has in store for us! Our God is an awesome God!

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.