



The Fifth Sunday in Lent, commonly called  
Passion Sunday.

*The Collect.*

**W**E beseech thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon thy people; that by thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

**A Prayer for Understanding**

**O** GOD Most High, Giver of light and love, I consecrate to Thee my understanding, my heart and my will, my whole being for time and for eternity. May my understanding be always obedient to Thy heavenly inspirations and the teachings of thy Holy Word, of which Thou art the infallible Author; may my heart be ever inflamed with love of God and of my neighbor; may my will be ever conformed to thy Divine will, and may my whole life be a faithful following of the life and virtues of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom with Thee, and the Holy Ghost be honor and glory for ever. Amen.

*10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. 11 If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: 12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: 13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: 14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: 15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: 16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. 17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. 18 And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. 19 So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof. (Prov 1:10-19)*

Before proceeding with the verses of today's devotion, I would like to remind you of a profound truth of yesterday's devotion which I do not believe I covered sufficiently. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov 1:7) May I aver that the "fear of the LORD" must ALWAYS precede a LOVE of the LORD? It is you and I who stand in the great NEED of the Lord. It is a concern that we must receive justice from God that drives us in FEAR to the Mercy Seat. To FEAR man, or ANYTHING, more than God is to be in transgression of the First Commandment of God. All of our primary emotions of

righteousness must be owned by the Lord our God. When we first learned to drive a car, we were practically terrified when we first drove in heavy traffic, but after we came to know the wheel and feel of the car, we began to enjoy driving. But we still have not forgotten that our driving skills, improperly applied, may lead to disaster. When we first came to terms with our *lostness* and *sinfulness*, we greatly feared God because of His JUSTICE; but when we came to Him in earnest, confessing our sins and leaning wholly upon Jesus Christ as a propitiation of those sins, we came to LOVE the Lord with surpassing gratitude for His Mercy. Instead of a cold and deathly fear of the Lord, the Christian- as He learns and knows Christ better – has his deathly fears of the Lord transformed into a loving and respectful fear – a fear that worries about hurting and disappointing our Lord instead of worry of His wrath.

Our concern for those less gifted with wisdom than that with which we may have been blessed and privileged to know is illustrated by the tenderness with which Solomon addresses the youth who will hear his voice – "**MY son!**" When I was a young boy, I held elders in great respect and esteemed their wisdom and knowledge. I was always gratified if they spoke to me in tender and familial terms (and they always did). Wisdom desires, above all else, to be made known. It is the fundamental of righteousness. Wisdom means to seek the most righteous means by which we may procure the most righteous result. Its teaching must begin at the elemental level – most desirably when the child is yet young and innocent, and from parent (the closest of authority standing in the stead of God) to the child... "**Train up a child in the way that he should go...**" So Solomon, a great King and son of David, refers to his charges as sons. In these verses today, Solomon switches his emphasis from the blessings of wisdom to the curses of a lack thereof. **10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.** The most effective moment to quench a fire is at the first spark before it grows into an all-consuming Inferno. Likewise, the most expeditious means of remaining virtuous is to avoid the temptations of sin as much as possible. Lydia Sigourney said it well in the concluding lines of the Camel's Nose:

*O youthful hearts to gladness born,  
Treat not this Arab lore with scorn!  
To evil habits' earliest wile  
Lend neither ear, nor glance, nor smile.  
Choke the dark fountain ere it flows,  
Nor e'en admit the camel's nose!*

It is always wise to refuse to follow sinners, for their very ways lead to sin. Do we remember that the way of sin is also a DIRECTION that spirals always downward to the gates of Hell? Sin is not passive or patient – it always beckons and draws its victim. There are only TWO ways in this life. **Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.** (Matt 7:13-14) King David, father of Solomon, must have taught Solomon in his childhood of that direction that leads to destruction, for he says in Psalm 1:1 **Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.** When sinners entice us to follow, **STAND FAST**. If we follow, we will begin to converse with sin as did Eve before the ill-winded Tree. And once we have grown close to sin, we sit down there and make ourselves at home in the wilderness of sin. Wickedness has no compassion and no heart for tender youth. **11. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; 12 Let us swallow**

them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit. Sinners always seek alliances for their sins, and they always seek strength in numbers. It is for this reason that nations, who are populated by greater numbers of unbelievers, are burdened with far greater national sins than those whose God is the Lord. (Ps 33:12) A Godly nation always tends toward freedom and liberty for its people, for only a Godly people can appreciate liberty in Christ. **13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil.** An ungodly people will always seek for wealth for which they have neither labored nor sacrificed, and there is never ENOUGH to satisfy their hungers.

Now follows a very telling warning for a free people, for the wicked always seek to have a common purse (socialism): **14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse.** They bind together in gangs and movements to usurp laws and boundaries to conduct their dishonest thievery. Of course, the Word warned us against such in many places, namely, ".....*if any would not work, neither should he eat.* (2 Thess 3:10) and the teaching of Christ concerning the laborers being paid that which the Lord of the Vineyard found acceptable regardless of time contributed in labors: ***Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? 16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*** (Matt 20:13-16) A wise people will never be deceived by a common purse, or scales of measure that are unjustly rigged.

**THE WAY OF THE WICKED: 15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: 16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.** If the first step of a journey is never taken, then we shall not be moved. If we refrain from taking the first step toward sin, then we cannot fall for that sin. The sinner's destination always ends in the shedding of innocent blood. This is the result of sin when it is fully consummated.

**THE CUNNING OF THE WICKED: 17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.** The motive to sin is always hidden just beneath the green grass. No one, desiring to trap a bird in a net, will spread the net in open view of the bird. The bird must be taken by craft and deceit. So the innocence of youth is marred by the sinner who entices him.

**THE FATE OF THE WICKED:** The fate of the wicked is to suffer the self-same destruction that they commit against others. **18 And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives.** The old Anglican priest, John Donne, wrote these words:

*Each man's death diminishes me,  
For I am involved in mankind.  
Therefore, send not to know  
For whom the bell tolls,  
It tolls for thee.*

The above lines fit the sinner with perfection. **19 So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.** The Way of the Lord is the Way of Life. The Way and Wages of sin is death. Simple enough?

Dear Friend, can you name a single issue facing America today that could not be

satisfied through Godly morality and Christian faith? But why is that the one solution that is most wholesome and efficacious is never acceptable to the world? It is because, long ago in our emergence as a great nation, we began to regard our greatness with vain pride to the exclusion of the God who made us great. We put expensive and exclusive labels on everything, but demeaned and trampled upon the banner of Heaven. Unless the Lord sends forth His Holy Spirit once more to "*move upon the face of the waters*" of America's soul and speaks those wonderful words of Power; "*Let there be Light*," the future of our beloved Land may be dark indeed.