

Our preparation for the coming of Christ is now. The opportunity for love is now. But love as a passion can be remarkably unsound, or rather the passions, whatever they are, need interpreting by love. And there's the catch and the puzzle of our vision of Christ as yet to come with our need of Christ to come now, to prepare us as it were for his coming. We can play with the word Wisdom in this way too, present from the beginnings of creation yet to be interpreted by love, or best said perhaps in the words of Tom Wright in his very accessible biography of St Paul

“the whole creation was made by the one God through his wisdom.... It began, to be sure as a metaphor; to speak of ‘Lady Wisdom as God’s handmaid in creation was a poetic way of saying that when God made the world, his work was neither random nor muddled, but “wise”- coherent and well-ordered; it made sense.... if you want to be a genuine human being reflecting God’s image, then you need to be wise as well. You need to get to know Lady Wisdom.” (p288)

And you need to get to know Lady love for the maidens in today's gospel passage are unprepared for Christ's coming because they lack the light of good deeds or rather, to avoid a crass quantitative approach – so many good deeds are needed to earn us salvation – they lack the quality of love from which goodness necessarily flows and this is love interpreted by wisdom, Lady Wisdom, an aspect of God who is love. You can see where I'm going with this, perhaps. Love and Wisdom are two sides of the same coin- they interpret one another. The disappointed maidens are not present, in a sense, at Christ's coming because they were never present at his first coming – they have never in a sense allowed themselves to be courted by Christ, they have never allowed his love to be an inspiration for their own. So the wisdom we are talking about is not some abstract, theoretical exercise depending on intelligence or intellect only but an engagement with a person who loves us and teaches us how to love, how to be wise in love. The passage ends with those chilling words of Christ to the disappointed maidens. 'I tell you solemnly I do not know you'. The wisdom of love and the love of wisdom are both gifts of God given since the beginning of creation to those who love God, and inevitably then, their neighbours. These are the gifts available to all which can unite both the living and the dead, that is to all who receive them – in Christ, wittingly or unwittingly. And this is the wisdom this is the love, which gives us hope that we may be reunited with the many dead of the many wars which beset humanity and which teach us so clearly that it is only the love of wisdom and the wisdom of love which can put an end to this cycle of violence. Or so, in our waiting we hope.

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