



Mother's feast of Gratitude – Rome 26 April 2020

Your life is a tree that bears fruit. Thank you, Mother!

General notes for reflection on the Psalm (by Fr. Marco Deflorio, SDB)

*Blessed is the one who does not walk
in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the way of sinners,
nor sit in company with scoffers.
Rather, the law of the LORD is his joy;
and on his law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree
planted near streams of water,
that yields its fruit in season;
Its leaves never wither;
whatever he does prospers.
But not so are the wicked, not so!
They are like chaff driven by the wind.
Therefore the wicked will not arise at the judgment,
nor will sinners in the assembly of the just.
Because the Lord knows the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.*



Psalm 1 is a psalm of wisdom instruction.

The theme of which the psalm speaks is the achievement of happiness, understood as 'succeeding' in life. But according to what criteria?

The contrast between wicked/evil and just is of a sapiential nature. Wisdom is identified with the law of the Lord. The search for wisdom is the way to achieve happiness and here this path is represented by the Torah.

There are two ways indicated: that of the **just** and that of the wicked.

The way of the just, the way of the wicked and in the end the outcome, the conclusion, re-proposing the two ways together as the point of arrival.

- Just: metaphor of the tree and of success
- Wicked: metaphor of chaff and of ruin

The aim of the Law is beatitude, that is, human happiness. To be happy means breaking with the way of seeing and experiencing things according to the world.

There are three NO's said at the beginning with decision in the metaphor of the journey of life, of which God is the source of true joy.

The ideology of the world is therefore that of anti-happiness, that of evil, of the wicked. You can be satisfied, without a doubt.... But is satisfaction synonymous with happiness?

The wicked is the one who points to external pleasure and success. He is a slave and not free, because he does not take his relationship with God into consideration.

Not following the path of the wicked means not following the behavior of sinners. The just is named in the singular, while sinners in the plural: it is an ideology to be contrasted.

Meditating on the law of Moses means keeping the instructions of God the Father in your heart, in your inner self.

This anticipates Jesus' attitude: "*my food is to do the will of my Father*" (Jn 4:34); the wicked, on the other hand, follow their own plans to achieve their goals. The psalmist trusts God, believes that His plan is better than human plans, therefore he spends his energies not in creating personal plans, but in understanding God's plan for his life.

Analysis of the Text

V.2: Meditates day and night

Always, because it is not a spirituality of the interval, but a continuous permeation of our whole life.

V.3: The metaphor of the tree of life

Water symbolizes the law, the tree the wise person: in Psalm 1 trust in God is identified with love for His law.

VV. 3-4: Tree and chaff

The first is stable, well rooted, and continuously irrigated, nourished. It grows upwards.

The chaff, on the other hand, disperses and spreads through confused, undirected streets and roads.

The tree is stable and does not change its opinion according to the fashions of the moment: those who make the Word of God their daily nourishment are not easily influenced by passing fashions.



In addition, the deep roots guarantee stability and fruitfulness: the tree puts out branches, leaves and fruit, while the chaff does not produce anything and is dispersed.

Each of us is therefore invited to produce a unique, unmistakable fruit that only we can generate. Although the Torah is always the same, it produces a different fruit in each person who meditates on it and who lives it. The **fruit** is the recurring metaphor in the Bible to express good works, especially active love (Jn 15: 1-17). The Word of God, says Isaiah, is never fruitless (Is 55: 10-11).

The fruit is a symbol of a life that is fulfilled in giving oneself, that is found by losing oneself, which becomes eternal by giving life to another plant.

In season:

The psalmist warns against expecting the fruit immediately. They will come, no doubt, but in due course. Just think of the pastoral successes of Jesus and what we still proclaim, announce, and try to live today.

Think of the tree in winter and then in spring: this indicates that the Word of God is not dead, but waits for the right season to bear fruit.

The tree of life is the metaphor of eternal life, which is achieved by thinking eschatologically and with the attitude of Jesus, who in the Spirit entrusted Himself totally to the Father.

What humans do according to the law of God leads them to a good end. If a person's work succeeds, it is because it is done according to God's criteria and plan, and ultimately it is God who makes it succeed, using human collaboration

The wicked:

The theme is poorly developed, because the goal is not to indicate the way of sinners, but that of the just. It is a way mentioned only to avoid it, to the point that only the outcome is described.

"Not so": the wicked, unlike the righteous, do not carry out their endeavors. A life plan that does not conform to the will of God cannot succeed, because human life is precisely in the hands of the Lord.

The wicked is plural: this indicates that they do not have a well-formed personality, but think collectively, doing what the group does, the mass, with all the consequences that follow.

The just, on the other hand, has his/her own individuality, thinks with the head: to go against the current takes a strong personality. Following the law of God is an act of freedom: the masses cannot decide it, but only each one personally. This is also found in the outcome expressed by metaphors: the tree for the just, the chaff for the wicked. It is an image that is represented by an infinite series of shredded pieces of straw; the chaff is what remains of the ear when the wheat, during threshing, was separated from the covering that contained it.

The chaff is horizontal, unlike the tree, because it has no roots or consistency and is carried by the wind in all directions. It is an image of the superficial person; it is sterile, it must be burned, because it does not produce life.

The separation of wheat from chaff is, in the Gospel, an image of God's final judgment: here too the judgment will manifest what the wicked already are, as indeed also the just.

The judgment, the just, the wicked

One senses how the just is not alone and that the communion of saints will be revealed only at the end. The right term is only pronounced at the end: can budgets be made only at the end of life? Perhaps, but this in any case is a stimulus and a provocation to live more and more, in crescendo,



a life that is full. At the moment of judgment, it seems clear that the wicked will have nothing to do with the just. It is an eschatological judgment, the last one.

The path of the just

The just are those who plant their tent in the will of God and this is a source of serenity, peace, and moral certainty. Even in the final verses, the verse of the just is developed, while that of the wicked is treated in a synthetic way. This indicates that the path they are following leads nowhere, because it is without a future.

For the psalmist, therefore, the two ways are not the same: the right one is the good one and must be described, while that of the wicked is only mentioned, so that it can be avoided.

Conclusions

This is a psalm very close to the newness of Jesus, because what matters to Him is not respecting the law literally, but the spirit with which certain actions are carried out. What matters is loving. **Jesus is certainly no less radical than Psalm 1 in regard to fulfilling the will of God.** As for the person praying this psalm, as also for Jesus, the meaning of life was in fulfilling the will of the Father, as recalls both the prayer of the *Our Father* (Mt 6: 7-14), and other biblical passages (Cf. Jn 4:34). Separation from sinners is also understood, not at the level of exclusion or marginalization, because Christ always approached them in His life. It is a spiritual separation, which means not to collaborate in evil. Finally, on an eschatological level, there is the resurrection of Christ that gives meaning to the whole perspective that characterizes the psalm.