### “The Word Became Flesh” Steve Finlan for The First Church, January 5, 2025

**Wisdom 10:13–18**

13 When a righteous man was sold, Wisdom did not desert him, but delivered him from sin. She descended with him into the dungeon, 14 and when he was in prison She did not leave him, until She brought him the scepter of a kingdom and authority over his masters. Those who accused him She showed to be false, and She gave him everlasting honor.

15 Wisdom delivered a holy people and blameless race from a nation of oppressors. 16 She entered the soul of a servant of the Lord, and withstood dread kings with wonders and signs. 17 She gave to holy people the reward of their labors; She guided them along a marvelous way, and became a shelter to them by day, and a starry flame through the night. 18 She brought them over the Red Sea, and led them through deep waters.

**John 1:10-18**

10The Word was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. 15(John testified to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’”) 16From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

Welcome everyone to First Church. On a cold winter’s day we can be warmed with good conversation and God’s love shared amongst us. Today we will learn about God’s love given to us to be received through wisdom.

You’ve heard of the literary device of personification, where a quality, like Love, is personified, and Love acts in such and such a way, as a person would. Well, in the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom is personified. She stays with someone, she gives authority to someone. Wisdom is an aspect of God, but is spoken of as having her own personhood and will. Some Christian thinkers will later take the personification literally, and identify Wisdom with the Son, or the Spirit. Other Christian philosophers spoke of wisdom as that which causes unity between the human and the divine.

In the Jewish writing, the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom is allowed to speak and act, as though she were either an aspect of God or a separate personification of God. Our passage talks about some of the heroes of Israel without naming them. But the author gives enough information that one can identify these heroes. The one who was sold, thrown in a dungeon, then rose to hold a scepter and authority, and was able to rebuke his false accusers, is Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob. You may remember that Jacob favored Joseph, giving him a coat of many colors. He was resented by his brothers, who waylaid him and then sold him into slavery. However, Joseph eventually rose to power in Egypt.

The one whose soul was entered into by Wisdom (Wis 10:16) is Moses. It’s odd that this paragraph then refers to a “blameless race” (10:15), since it was Jacob’s own brothers who had sold him into slavery, and the Israelites of Moses’ time were certainly not pictured as blameless. They were deemed children of God, not because of their bloodline or their supposed blamelessness, but because God had willed the connection. The ones who followed Moses were deemed a holy people, and Wisdom chose to guide them out of Egypt (Wis 10:17–18).

When we look at the Israelites of Jesus’ time, we do not find them blameless. In the John passage, the Word came to his own people, but they received him not (John 1:11). Rather, Jesus came “to all who received him,” and that means people of many nationalities “who believed in his name” (1:12) and to whom he gave the power to be children of God, not because of their ancestry, but because of their faith-connection to God (1:13).

John here also tells us what the Word’s role, the Son’s role, is to be. The Son comes to reveal the Father to humanity; no mortal has seen the Father, and “it is God the only the Son . . . who has made him known” (1:18). The Son’s job is to reveal the Father’s nature, and also to show people that they are children of God, and thus members of the family of God. That also is a connection that is willed by God. Most of what we know about God comes from Jesus’ life and teachings.

The divine Son became a *human* son, like you or me, and was able to shine a light on our spiritual relationship with God. Jesus came to reveal that we are children of God, by God’s grace. Again, let’s consider the fact that biological ancestry is completely irrelevant here. That was a shocking concept in the ancient world, where family ties were the most important thing, and where the descendants of Israel believed they had a special relationship with God. Now the message comes so that *whoever* believes in Jesus, whoever offers a cup of water to one needy child of God, whoever draws upon the grace and truth that comes from Jesus, is part of God’s family. It is a faith-family, not a genetic family.

Now the rules have changed. No race or people has an inside track or special privileges. Even the nationalistic theme that overlies the story in the Wisdom of Solomon must now be changed in our minds. Instead of “a holy people and blameless race” (Wis 10:15), we need people—from *any* race—who are willing to follow Wisdom’s leadership. *Anyone* can now be “guided along a marvelous way” (10:17); it is no longer just for Israelites.

This is no longer surprising to us, but imagine how radical it must have sounded to the original readers of John’s gospel! That any who believed could have the power to become children of God! The grace and truth that came through Jesus was now available to everyone.

It’s true that the Word incarnated as a Jew of Galilee, but this Jew is a *World* Savior, not just a savior of Jewry. In fact, he doesn’t save groups or nations at all; he saves individuals—all who believe. And he came so that each person might have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

Let us experience, let us somehow *feel* the grace and truth of Jesus the Son of God, the revealer of the Father’s love. Let us know ourselves as children of God, destined to grow up into the Father’s universe family, brothers and sisters to the host of heaven.

Let *that* put a spring in your step and warm your way this week as you walk with Jesus.