

PROLOGUE: The call to journey as disciples with Christ to the Kingdom
V. 1-4 Principal motifs: Listen, respond, put into action

1 **Listen** [Wisdom: live life consciously] carefully, my child (son), to my teachings and attend to them with the **ear of your heart**. **Willingly accept (welcome it)** [hear what God wants in any given situation & put it into practice] the advice of a devoted teacher and **put it into action (practice)**.

2 Thus you will return by the **labor of obedience** [entire life of one who is faithful to God] to the Holy One from whom you drifted through inertia and apathy (**restoration**). 3 **This message of mine is for you**, then, if you are ready to give up your own will, once and for all, and armed with the powerful and noble weapons of obedience **to do battle for Jesus**, the Christ. [*The act of listening, responding & taking action leads to the start of the journey of turning and returning to God.*]

4 First, every time you set out to do some good work, you must **pray** to God most earnestly to bring it to perfection. (**monastic vocation**)

Imperative v. 5-7 (loved to life by God, now we must love God back)

5 In God's goodness, we are already counted as God's own, and therefore we should never grieve the Holy One by our evil actions. 6 With the good gifts which are in us, we must obey God at all times that God may never become the angry parent who disinherits us, 7 nor the dreaded one, enraged by our sins, who punishes us forever as worthless servants for refusing to follow the way to glory.

Invitation, Response v. 8-11 [moves from voice of loving parent to Scripture]

8 Therefore, **let us rise at long last**, for Scripture stirs us with the words: "It is high time we rose from sleep." (shake off spiritual lethargy) 9 **Let us open our eyes to the divine light**, and **let us listen with astonished ears** to the warning of the divine voice, which **daily** cries out to us: 10 "If you hear God's voice today, **do not harden our hearts**." 11 And again: "You that have ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches."

Way I v. 12-21 (Psalm 33/34) (favorite for catechesis in early Church)

12 And what does the Spirit say? "**Come and listen to me**; I will teach you to reverence God." 13 "**Run** while you have the light of life, that the darkness not overtake you. [*journey*] **v. 14-18 dialogue with God** 14 **Seeking workers** in a multitude of people, **God calls out** and says again: 15 "Is there anyone here who **yearns for life and desires to see good days**?" 16 [Intimate dialogue; with God & the soul: listening, hearing, responding] If you hear this and your answer

is “I do,” God then directs these words to you: 17 “If you desire true and eternal life, **keep your tongue free from vicious talk and your lips from all deceit; turn away from evil and do good; let peace be your quest and aim.**”

18 Once you have done this, my eyes will be upon you and my ears will listen for your prayers; and even before you invoke me, I will say to you: “Here I am.”

[summary v. 19-21 God shows way of life] 19 What is more delightful than this voice of the Holy One calling to us? 20 See how God’s love shows us the way of life. 21 Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, **let us set out on this way**, with the **Gospel** for our **guide**, that we may deserve to see the Holy One who has called us to the eternal presence.

Way II v. 22-34 Psalm 14/15 [good deeds we have to do]

22 If we wish to dwell in God’s **tent**, we will never arrive unless we run there by doing good deeds [translate good will into practical Christianity]. 23 But let us ask with the prophet: “Who will dwell in your tent, O God; who will find **rest** upon your holy mountain?” 24 After this question, then, let us listen well to what God says in reply, for we are shown the way to God’s tent. **[v. 25-27 list of things to do]**

25 “Those who **walk blamelessly** and act **justly**; 26 who **speak the truth** candidly nor listened to slanders against a neighbor.” 27 When the wicked one suggests something, we fling both the evil one and 28 all wicked promptings far from the sight of our hearts, annihilating incipient thoughts, taking them and smashing them against the Christ.” 29 These people **reverence** (fear) **God**, and do not become elated over their good performance; they know that what is good in themselves could not have come about except for God. 30 They praise the Holy One working in them, and say with the prophet: “Not to us, O God, not to us give the glory, but to your name alone.

31 In just this way Paul the Apostle refused to take credit for the power of his preaching. He declared: “By God’s grace I am what I am.” 32 And again Paul said: “They who boast should make their boast in God.” **[v. 33-34 summary]**

33 That is why it is said in the gospel: “Whoever hears my words and does them I liken to the prudent person who built a house on a rock. 34 The floods came, the winds blew and battered that house, but it did not collapse because it was founded on rock.” (God is with us in the here and now: Listen to the Word of God & put it into practice)

Decision v. 35-44 (One who hears and does translate Christ’s teaching into action) 35 With this conclusion, God waits for us to respond by action every day to these holy teachings. 36 Therefore the days of this life are

given us at a time of truce for the correction of our faults. 37 As the Apostle says: “Do you not know that the **patience of God** (allowing one the time to grow) is leading you to repent?” 38 And **indeed God assures us in love**: “I do not wish the death of sinners, but that they turn back to me and live.” 39 And so we have queried God about what is required of a dweller in the divine tent, and we have received the teaching about dwelling there. The question is—will we fulfil the duties of an inhabitant? 40 Therefore we must prepare our hearts and our bodies to wage **the battle of holy obedience** to the divine precepts. **[40-44 every theme is summarized: need for personal integration]** 41 Let us ask the Holy One to supply the grace to aid us in that which we cannot accomplish by nature. 42 If we wish to attain eternal life, while there is still time and we are still in this body, 43 and there remains time to accomplish all this in the light of this life, 44 we must run and accomplish now what will profit us for eternity.

Means v. 45-50 [school: humility, obedience, patience]

45 Therefore we must establish a **school for God’s service. (v. 46-49 inserted by Benedict) [practical implementation of the Gospel]** 46 In its organization, we have tried not to create anything grim or oppressive (harsh or burdensome). 47 (The good of all) In a given case we may have to arrange things a bit strictly to amend faults or preserve love. 48 When that happens, do not immediately take fright and flee the path of salvation, which can only be narrow at its outset. 49 But as we progress in this **way of life** (monastic life/conversion) and in faith, **our hearts will expand with the inexpressible delight of love** (our hearts will swell with the unspeakable sweetness of love), enabling us to race along the **way of God’s commandments**. 50 Never swerving from God’s instructions, but **faithfully observing the Divine teachings in the monastery until death**, we shall through **patience** share in the **passion of Christ** that we may deserve also to be companions in the **eternal presence**. Amen.

Questions to ponder

- 1. How have you been able to look at life around you with spiritual eyes and ears and recognize God’s presence?**
- 2. After listening to the principal motifs of the Prologue, what speaks to your heart about how this way of life might be helpful to you?**

