

Ephesians 5:15-20^{vi}

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

^{vi}About Ephesians 5:15-20

Today's reading concludes the author's exhortations on Church life. The first part contrasts the paths of wisdom and of folly, which theme, like the contrast between light and darkness (5:7-13), is taken from the Old Testament wisdom tradition. The wise are to make "the most of the time," (literally, "redeem the present opportunity," Colossians 4:5) offered by the contemporary world. Their response of obedience to God's will is characterized by four aspects.

The first aspect is understanding God's will, that is discerning it intellectually. This is made possible, not by inebriation with wine (Proverbs 23:31-35), but by inspiration by the Spirit. Intoxication was a part of some pagan cults, and even occasionally of Christian gatherings (1 Corinthians 11:21).

Secondly, the Lord's will is not discerned individually but corporately in a context of worship and prayer. Just as today, vocal and possibly instrumental music appears to have been a usual part of early worship (Acts 16:25; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13). Both psalms from the Old Testament and newly composed hymns (such as that quoted in 5:14) were sung. The appeal to sing "in your hearts" (v. 19) is not an appeal to the emotions, but is another way of saying the whole self. So, thirdly, the response to God's will is to be made joyfully, and with a total commitment of life "with the Spirit...to the Lord" and in the Lord's name, "to God the Father" (vv. 18-20).