

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours this day in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. The title for today's sermon is 'Searching for wisdom in all the wrong places.' and is based on the Gospel reading, Luke chapter 2. Let us pray.... Amen.

The electronic world is racing forward, you could say on a quest, to have as much information literally at the people's fingertips. Smart phones, computers, other electronic gadgets are advancing and being produced at an amazing pace to increase how much information we have available whenever and wherever we want. It is said that the average person today is exposed to exponentially greater amounts of information on a daily basis than an average person was in a week even a few decades ago. Heads are being filled with all kinds of stuff, but with what? Are people more wise, or is there just more information floating around? Does Facebook, Twitter, or access to other social media make us wiser, or does it get in the way of wisdom? Does having the latest iPhone, Samsung Galaxy, Blackberry Q whatever, tablet, or other 'smart phone' make us wiser or does it make us more on the lines of fools? Does the increased amount of information available, real information, false information, and obscene information, make people wiser, or does it make them fools? Where do you search for true wisdom? There are many who suggest people are wiser today, but by whose standard? By their own standard, or by God's standard?

To understand what true wisdom is, it is best to listen to the most wise individual. The Old Testament lesson today tells about the wisest person in all the Old Testament and how he attained his incredible wisdom. His name was Solomon. Now, Solomon was the son of David, handpicked by God to sit on the throne of David. Solomon was not the oldest, nor the most cunning of David's sons, yet still he was the one chosen by God to be king of Israel.

One might think with such a huge honor, Solomon would have been pretty proud of himself. But look at why he went to Gibeon. Solomon did not go in search of wisdom, rather Solomon went to offer sacrifices to God. Listen again to Solomon's response to God's Word to give Solomon anything Solomon wanted. Solomon said: "**You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day.**"<sup>7</sup> **And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in.**"<sup>8</sup> **And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude.**"<sup>9</sup> **Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"**(1 Kings 3:6-9)

Solomon took absolutely no credit or honour for his position or earthly authority. Instead he is looking entirely to God, and God's promises to God's people. In his great humility, Solomon asks God to give him the wisdom in his God-given vocation. Solomon does what James would later say in his letter, "**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.**" (James 1:5)

Here is where wisdom comes down. Wisdom is from God first and foremost. Other education and knowledge is very important, but does it make you wise for salvation? Not a

chance! Regular school education does not make you wise for salvation. Are schools and teachers and other education important? Yes! Are teachers, engineers, farmers, trades people, secretaries all important? Yes. Do they give wisdom. Yes. Do they make a person wise for salvation. No.

Here is where we hear about Solomon and him trusting in God for wisdom. Solomon didn't ask for the newest and fastest tablet, he didn't ask for a faster high-speed internet connection, he didn't even ask for a greater library, Solomon asked for something still greater: Solomon asked for discernment between good and evil, Solomon asked for wisdom.

And God was faithful to His promise, He filled Solomon with wisdom. God gave him so much wisdom Solomon wrote three of the Old Testament books, including one on wisdom; the Book of Proverbs. In it, among other things, Solomon focuses clearly on where wisdom, real and lasting wisdom comes from; **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."**(Proverbs 9:10) **"For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; <sup>7</sup> he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, <sup>8</sup> guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints."**(Proverbs 2:6-8) Yet the fear of the LORD is not just the beginning of wisdom, Solomon continues and says; **"The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor."**(Proverbs 15:33)

And so we jump ahead to the Gospel reading appointed for today, the second Sunday after Christmas. Jesus, Wisdom incarnate, comes into His city and into His Temple to celebrate the Passover Feast. Jesus, along with His parents, came to Jerusalem to celebrate the greatest redemptive event in the history of the Jews. Jews from around the world came to celebrate and remember when God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. The angel of death killed all the firstborn of the Egyptians, but 'passed over' the firstborn of the Israelites because the blood of a lamb on the lintel and the posts of the door.

They were remembering all those who were saved in Egypt by the blood of the lambs, and the Jews continued to sacrifice lambs every year in memory of God's extraordinary action for their redemption. They remembered the wisdom given to them.

Yet, sometimes in our quest for wisdom we get sidetracked and focus only on the twelve year old Jesus lost for three (3) days. Now, there are many connections between Luke's record of this event and Luke's record of the events around Jesus' death Resurrection which are important. Luke uses very similar language and imagery here to point ahead to Jesus' death and resurrection, His 'missing for three (3) days' and the searching to find him. The boy Jesus was missing three (3) days missing; the man Jesus spent three (3) days in the tomb (24:7). There is the seeking of one who is lost, for Jesus' parents, among his relatives, those they were traveling with, and then Jerusalem (2:44-45); after Jesus death, the women search the tomb (24:5). Then there is a sharp question asked to those who were seeking, **"why have you been seeking"**(2:49) to His parents, and **"why do you seek the living among the dead"**(24:5). Then also the response of those seeking to the Word spoken to them, Mary **"kept all the words in her heart"**(2:51), and **"remembering His words"**(24:8) by the women at the tomb.

Other times in our quest for wisdom we only see Jesus sitting in the Temple and talking with the teacher for the three (3) days He was missing. God at the age of twelve (12) was in His Temple talking to the elite religious teachers. God in the flesh, Wisdom incarnate present in His Temple. He came and spoke and discussed matters with them. We hear about Jesus; His words, His understanding, and His answers and how He amazed all who heard Him.

These are good to look at, but hearing about something usually does not give as much wisdom as hearing from the source. As Solomon stated, "**For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;**"(Proverbs 2:6) and here Jesus opened His mouth both to the religious teachers and also to His parents. His words to the religious teachers are not recorded, yet His words to His parents were. Mary said to Jesus: "**Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.**" (Luke 2:48-49) You can imagine how scared you would be at losing your child for three days, and not just your child but also the Son of God. But continuing on, Luke records Jesus' words, Jesus' first words recorded in Scripture, as He answers Mary and clarifies His purpose and reason for being Jesus said to them, "**Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?**"(Luke 2:48-49)

There is a very important word Jesus says: must. It was necessary that He be in His Father's house doing His Father's work, obeying and being submissive to God first and foremost. Jesus coming, being in the Temple was not just a lucky coincidence. Wisdom came into the world that we would know God, all He has done, and all He continues to do for us and all people. Jesus came to open our eyes to wisdom, true and eternal wisdom, the wisdom of God. Jesus tells Mary, and everyone else there Who His Father really is. Here in the Temple Jesus pointed to Himself as the only Son of God, God in the flesh who has come into the world. Here God opens His mouth, but as we see through most of Jesus life, the people did not understand, at least not yet.

Still, Jesus came for the sole reason to do His Father's will. Jesus came to save sinners. Jesus came to exchange His life for yours. Jesus came to pour out His blood to cover all your sins. Jesus came to die for all your trespasses. Jesus then also rose from the dead and thereby Jesus came to give you eternal life.

Jesus came and did what the world considered foolishness to give wisdom; to give eternal life. As Paul told the Corinthians: "**For Christ ... sent me ... to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. <sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**" (1 Corinthians 1:17-18)

As the people then did not understand, people continue to not understand God and His Word. It is clear; there are only two sides you can be on, you can be in Christ, in Wisdom, or you can be fool. You can be saved in Christ or damned, damning yourself as a fool. Now many people have rejected God and thereby chosen the second. Still, the gift is there, God Word has been given, it is still proclaimed. In His Word He reveals we do have a Saviour, we do not have a hidden God, not a lost one, but a revealed God. We know where He is. He has come for you and me. We are still in the Christmas season in which we continue to celebrate and remember how Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in a stable and placed in a manger. God has come for you and me. It is not just a nice

story, it is historical fact. It's the story of your salvation and mine. Christ came for you, me, and all people. Christ died for all people. He did this to open our eyes and give us wisdom, saving wisdom. Now it may not tell you how to perform surgery or which stocks to pick, but God's Word does clearly tell you you are His child, He you are redeemed, you are adopted into His family, you are saved. Not because of what you have done, but because of the wonderful grace God has and because of what Christ has done for you.

So we can thank God who has given the Holy Spirit to His Church and to all who are baptized so we can believe in Him. We can be thankful that God comes in those apparently simple things like His Word where the Holy Spirit does work to create and sustain faith in Him. Thank God that He "**has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing**"(Ephesians 1:3) beginning at the Font where He made you His own child and gave you saving wisdom. For God has given you wisdom to make you wise for salvation. God has given you His Word and Sacraments, through which the Holy Spirit works in you to make you wise to know Christ Jesus, your Lord and Saviour! Thanks God that He sent His Son born in a stable and placed on a sheep's food tray so that one day He could be our Lamb who would die in our place, and who does take our sins away. Thanks be to God that He has worked out your salvation in Christ. God has filled you with wisdom, wisdom much more important than anything money can buy.

As Paul tells us in the Epistle lesson today; "**In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,<sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight<sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ<sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.**"(Ephesians 1:7-10)

The mystery is revealed: Christ has come for you, He is with you this day and everyday. God's will is to save sinners, on the cross Jesus did just that. At the font God made you His own. Through His Word He continues to proclaim that Good News to you. And in the Lord's Supper He continues to feed you His own body and blood. Why? To forgive you all your sins and to lead you to eternal life. Amen.

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