

Pentecost 11 Year B 2009

Texts: 1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14

Psalm 111

Ephesians 5:15-20

John 6:51-58

“Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise” Ephesians 5:15

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen.

**I am going to be doing something different in this sermon. It is called a dialogical sermon. I will be asking you a series of questions. They are not rhetorical; I actually want you to answer them, to tell me what you think. You can take a few moments to think about each question. No one has to answer them aloud; although I’m hoping some of you will jump in and do so.**

**What is wisdom? How do you define it?**

**Who was the wisest person you have ever known? What made them wise?**

**How can you tell something is wise and not foolish?**

**I have been thinking a lot about wisdom this week. Today’s Old Testament reading and Epistle reading both concentrate on it. Solomon asked for it. Christians are supposed to seek it. I think we all would agree that it is an important quality to attain.**

**I posed the question “what is wisdom?” to an on-line group of friends. Here are a few of their responses: “Wisdom is what you get from a lifetime of listening when you’d have preferred to talk.” Doug Larson**

**“Wisdom is not answering the question.” Rev. Jake Owensby**

**“Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.” Charles Spurgeon 19<sup>th</sup> cent, English preacher.**

**“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”**

**This last quote is found no less than 14 times in the Bible.**

**“The fear of the Lord, is the beginning of wisdom.” The fear that is mentioned is not terror and trepidation. It is not quaking in our boots like the cowardly lion before the great wizard. Fear means to be in awe of. To be really WOWED by the greatness and the goodness of God. To be in awe is to praise, to be moved to an intense gratitude for being in God’s presence.**

**To praise God is not wisdom, it is the beginning of it. It suggests movement, a going deeper into our faith and worship. It is from praise and thanksgiving, it is from worshipping together that a deeper knowledge and love of God comes about.**

**We often confuse wisdom with intelligence and yet they are not the same thing. We confuse wisdom with intellect and yet, as Charles Spurgeon reminds us, one can know a great deal and be a big fool. We confuse wisdom with IQ and yet some of our greatest lessons are learned at the side of someone who is simple and humble and childlike.**

**We often confuse wisdom with age, and although wisdom can come with age, it doesn’t always follow that it will.**

**Biblical wisdom is very different. We Westerners tend to fall into the Greek form of wisdom that is made up of philosophy and ideas. But wisdom in the biblical sense is not so esoteric or theoretical. It is practical, it is faithful and it concentrates ones thoughts and actions on the one true God. <sup>1</sup>**

**When we concentrate on building our intellects we are busy in a self-focused activity. When we cultivate wisdom in the biblical sense we are engaged in an activity that takes us outside ourselves, that focuses on sharing the glory of God with others. It is not a solitary activity but one that is communal and builds up the body of believers.**

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<sup>1</sup> Heidi Husted in the Christian Century August 2-9, 2000 p. 790

**In the reading from Ephesians this morning we are admonished to be careful how we live, that how we live and how our lives are perceived by others is very important. We are told that making the most our time is to use that time to God's best advantage. When we do that we may seem foolish by worldly standards, but we are growing in wisdom by God's standards.**

**Wisdom is a deep, discerning search for God and God's purposes for us and for the world. It is "listening with the ear of your heart" as St. Benedict put it. A discerning heart is a listening heart, first and foremost. A listening heart takes the time to respond to God's call to us, not to simply react to it. To respond is to answer God's call to us from a far deeper and richer place than from where we react.**

**Our response to God is more than just ethical conduct. It is more than doing right because if we don't we may get into trouble or disappoint others or create problems we don't know how to get out of. Anyone can choose to act ethically.**

**But as Christians our response to God is more than that; our response is to be grounded in thanksgiving. It is a joy-filled entering into relationship with the One who first sought us out. In other words wisdom is relational. Becoming wise is not a solitary act, it is always in relation to God and to others.**

**In the Old Testament reading this morning when God asks Solomon what he can give him, Solomon makes a very interesting comment. He says, "your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen...Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern good from evil."**

**"Your servant is in the midst of the people." It is in serving God's people that Solomon will become wise and in deciding to serve others God gives Solomon wisdom in order to serve them better because in serving them, Solomon is serving God.**

**We are shown how to grow in wisdom. We are told where wisdom resides and how we can be blessed by it. It really isn't rocket science nor is it dependent upon our intellectual abilities-thank God for that!**

**And that is exactly the point! Thank God. That is where our journey to wisdom starts.**

**Thank God for what we have been given in Jesus.**

**Thank God that we are sought out by God who wants a relationship with us.**

**Thank God for putting us in the midst of God's people in order to serve them in Jesus' name.**

**Thank God for giving us one another to learn and grow and become wise together.**

**Dear St. Matthew's, that is what we are to do together, today, every day of our lives and through every act of our days...**

**Thank God.**

**Amen.**