

1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

Wisdom is good.

It is OK to be a thinking Christian. There is little wrong with theology...the act of thinking about God and what God should mean to people. Theology is not a bad thing. In fact, wisdom in general is a good thing, I think that we might agree. The seeking after intelligence is not just for some people and not for others. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of being human is the ability to reason and make decisions based on knowledge that has been accumulated. It makes that since we seem to have such a large brain capacity in relation to the size of the rest of our bodies that we ought to use the brain that we have been given. The old television commercial noted that the mind is a terrible thing to waste.

Yes, there are those kinds of people who look down on “book-learning” and are very willing to tell you that they are really a lot smarter than some of those “college educated” people. But my experience was that even some of those people were not very wise, indicted by the amount of progress that they had in life to that point. We still value the pursuit of a college degree, whether it be one of the two year variety or the more commonplace four year experience. We think that a college education is more important than simply giving a person bragging rights for their favorite college team. Knowledge and the proper use of it which we call wisdom is central to stable and worthwhile societies.

In passing, note that it was the **Presbyterians that were some of the earliest founders** of so many of the universities and colleges that dot the fifty states. And of course our tradition has prized the expectation of educated clergy, whether the sermons that are heard show evidence of that academic work or not.

And so we get to Solomon. **Solomon was wise enough to know that he wasn't, yet.** Thus we have the story from the Old Testament part of the lectionary for today. The well known story serves to highlight why Solomon was considered, amongst the other less laudable parts of his kingship, one of the wisest people that ever lived, and for good measure, an object lesson for all those who would seek to be a leader of the people of God. Again, he was wise enough to know that he isn't. In this episode, there is no claim to be smarter than others. There is no sense of false bravado and tooting his own horn. Young as we are led to believe that he was, he had not had enough experience to develop a sense of misplaced pride, or the self-confidence that he did not sin nor ever make a questionable decision. The journey of his kingship is starting on the right track, by knowing that he needed wisdom that he didn't feel that he had.

Alongside that story we find the admonitions of the writer of the letter to the **Ephesians, in which the congregation(s) are encouraged to act wisely, for the times require that.** For if the readers act with a desire to make wise decisions, and not just do what it takes to get-along, then the call of Christ will be forwarded and carried out faithfully. Wisdom will be the most important tool to use as the congregants work together, and impact the world that is around them through their works of mission and charity. It could well be that not only will taking time to make measured and wise decisions create a more faithful work, but there will be others that will notice that the gathered people of the Gospel have a message that is not flighty, but rather has substance.

Indeed, wisdom is still a central desire of those who lead the people of God in Christ. Not only does it make sense to want to make decisions and follow lifestyles that engender loyalty and effectiveness, **but our leaders vow to lead that way.** They are commissioned and were commissioned with that particular charge. For there is that question that all ordained officers in the Presbyterian tradition are called to answer in the affirmative, and that of course live out that vow,

win that there are seek to serve the people under their care with “energy, intelligence, imagination and love.” Elders know this four part call well.

Wisdom, as the Old Testament book Proverbs so clearly proclaims, is to be sought and prized. Above all, the text directs, get wisdom. **And so we seek it, through our degrees, our studies, our sermons, our training, and for Christians, through our continuing reading of Holy Scripture. We pray for it, like Solomon, and we work at it.** Truth, our tradition says, is in order to goodness.

But where should wisdom take you?

One would think that the accumulation of knowledge, even biblical knowledge for that matter should have a result to it, more than the simple amassing of it. Wisdom should have a use, shouldn't it. Degrees should be of benefit to the world. Research in the sciences, for instance should have some kind of practical application that lifts the quality of life, in at least some small way. Research in the different kinds of academic disciplines should not be done simply to preserve one's academic position or even to fulfill some kind of academic expectation or grant protocol.

Wisdom should take the person somewhere, and not to pad one's portfolio.

Solomon, for example is truly praying for wisdom, for he knows that he is not in a position to run a company, but rather the people of the One to whom he is praying. **If he is going to lead the people of God in the right way, he wants to be on the same page,** or at least in the same ballpark. Wisdom is so that he can fulfill the calling that has placed upon him. Good for him. That is what the wisdom is for.

And then, there is us. **Where should wisdom take us?**

We have already mentioned that leaders need wisdom to have that kind of clarity and empathy for the people of God. In that way, we echo the desire of Solomon is his prayer. And our prayers for wisdom can go all the way for particular request for insight on the weighty matters of congregational life, all the way to the simple prayer to keep us from saying something stupid and messing up a perfectly benign situation. It could be as simple as having a mature take on the particular instances in our lives that call for mature reactions and choices.

Or...it could be that our wisdom should carry us to the point of being a part of the very source of wisdom itself for the people of God, where wisdom is a part of who we are, apart from endless petitions to the Almighty for situational advice.

For I think that wisdom should lead us to be a part of that which most decidedly the presence and experience of Jesus Christ.

Consider the mechanic, whose advice you trust because of the experience over decades that the mechanic has had with various automobile problems. You trust the mechanic's wisdom because his life has been one who eats, drink and sleeps the experience of car repair.

Or the veteran, various called that in a number of different roles. That is, the veteran on the athletic clubhouse who seen so much, and even if the body seems to be showing the signs of age and the battle, the wisdom is sought. Or certainly the veteran of the battlefield, whose grizzled demeanor bespeaks having seen the horror and conduct of the surviving soldier and sailor. It is the veterans who find themselves in leadership rolls because of the wisdom that they ahem earned the hard way. They are the ones who demonstrate and make decision based on eating, drinking and sleeping the fog and unpredictability of the battle. Their wisdom is born of hard and direct experience.

Should it not be true also for the disciple who craves the possession of wisdom in helping lead a congregation, or other groups that look for what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. That is, don't you want someone's insight who has shown him or herself to be a person that eat, drink, and sleeps Jesus? I would think so. And that may be the reason why the qualifications noted in First Timothy for leaders in the Christ's church include the admonition that elders should not be recent converts.

And so we get to the statement by the Master in our Gospel lesson where he proclaims:

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; 55for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. 56Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

Yes, this text has often been interpreted in terms of the sacrament, and certainly the words are there. **But I would go out on a limb to say that Christ is calling people who would be followers of His, and even disciples, that they need to be ones who becoming enveloped in that which makes a life that is not simply a tradition, but where the follower eats, drinks and sleeps Jesus...to the point where wisdom is just about second nature...where the person does not have to ask what would Jesus do.**

For they already know. Not because they have the Holy Spirit in them, but because they are a part of the things already that Christ has called them to be a part of. **They have perpetual discipleship grease under their fingernails like the good mechanics do.** They have the aching hearts like the aching joints of the veteran athletes. **And maybe they even have the indelible marks of the crosses that they have carried, where they don't have to explain anything.**

And so we come to the Table. A table that, frankly, is not always neat by the time that we are finished. Crumbs and spots in the rug, you know. **Maybe marks of holy moments that we shared, subtle ways of remembrance of the Christ.**

**So then, wisdom is not a function of your degrees but of your devotion.
Wisdom is not characterized by an examination, but by experience.**

That is those people who are willing (more than just once in a while,) to eat, drink and sleep with the presence of the One who invites us, discover the depth of what it means to be alive. The fullest expression of wisdom indeed.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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