

"God's Gift of Wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5)(12.15.19)

LET US PRAY.

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5 (NIV84)

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

2 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: God's Gift of Wisdom

INTRODUCTION:

Advent is about waiting expectantly. The Jews had waited for the Messiah for hundreds of years. We are waiting for Jesus' Second Coming until when...only the Father knows. We deliberately try to create an atmosphere that is filled with anticipation and expectation.

When you came to church this morning did you have expectations? Do expect to experience the presence of God? Do expect the blessing of fellowship? Do you expect to learn about the Almighty and Holy Lord? How many of you have been working on the sermon questions in the bulletin? Today we will explore these questions: What does righteousness mean? How about sanctification? How about redemption? What is true wisdom? You see, I have expectations too.

As will be demonstrated, God is the primary actor, the primary agent, the primary force. And still, we are to be readied vessels prepared to receive the blessings. It would be foolish of me to just show up each Sunday morning without doing the requisite preparation to preach. Likewise, each person in the congregation must also do the hard work of heart work. (repeat)

Isaac Watts was a minister and prolific hymn writer. This hymn he entitled "Christ Our Wisdom:"

Christ our wisdom, righteousness, etc.

(1 Cor. 1:30.)

Buried in shadows of the night

We lie till Christ restores the light;
Wisdom descends to heal the blind,
And chase the darkness of the mind.
Our guilty souls are drowned in tears
Till his atoning blood appears;
Then we awake from deep distress,
And sing, "The Lord our Righteousness."
Our very frame is mixed with sin,
His Spirit makes our natures clean
Such virtues from his suff'rings flow,
At once to cleanse and pardon too.
Jesus beholds where Satan reigns,
Binding his slaves in heavy chains;
He sets the pris'ners free, and breaks
The iron bondage from our necks.
Poor helpless worms in thee possess
Grace, wisdom, power, and righteousness;
Thou art our mighty All, and we
Give our whole selves, O Lord, to thee.

BODY:

This is our key verse for today.

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

The pronoun "him" refers to God. It is because of God that you are in Christ Jesus. Jesus said in John 6:44 (NIV84), "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." and (John 14:6) "No one comes to the Father except through me." So, give God the glory, the credit.

If you are "in Christ" you have been born again. You have been born from above; born of water and Spirit. For in him we live and move and have our being.

In John 17:20–21 (NIV84) Jesus prays, 20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

These next words of Jesus integrate the concept of being in Christ Jesus with knowledge of God. They serve as an excellent transition to the wisdom of God.

John 17:6–8 (NIV84)

6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me."

Before we get into particulars, let us first address some generalities about wisdom. You can see by the highlights of the word "wisdom" in this portion of scripture that Paul is going to great lengths to compare and contrast human wisdom and divine wisdom. There is a significant difference in the content, in the depth, in the breadth, in the effectiveness, in the truth of God's wisdom in comparison to human wisdom. It has almost become cliché but God's ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

In fact, the difference is as different as heaven is from earth. A paradox is a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true. Because of the limitations of the human mind in its construction; because of the limitations of the human mind due to sin; many demands, commands, and doctrines of God seem like foolishness to the person not "in Christ."

Even many baby Christians struggle with the great truths of scripture until they give up spiritual milk for the substantial meat of their faith. This is why Paul declares to know nothing but Christ Jesus, and him crucified. The paradox of God becoming man and dying for the sins of fallen creation makes no logical sense to the unenlightened intellect of those that are perishing.

In other English translations, wisdom is listed as the first in the list followed by righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. I believe that the NIV has it correct in this case because it fits so well with the paradoxical relationship of human and divine wisdom. In the NIV, it is saying that this wisdom that comes from being in Christ is a composite that includes righteousness, holiness, and redemption. At the same time the NIV is not quite as accurate as other translations by using holiness instead of sanctification; but, we will get to that in a minute.

Wisdom is generally considered to be applying experience, knowledge, and good judgment. It is more than just information, or data, or facts, or even truth. Wisdom is an understanding of a situation and the underlying reality with all the implications. Godly wisdom includes common sense, compassion, and virtue.

Almighty God exceeds human capacity in every aspect of intellectual acuity. Indeed, being perfect in every way, the mind of Christ actually will give us insight into a different realm. There are no hindrances like self-deception, sin, or limitations in divine wisdom. There is no prejudice or self-centeredness to divert divine wisdom.

This wisdom from being in Christ gives us the capacity to know our heavenly Father and the things of God. Jesus is the exact representation of the invisible God. If we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father. If we are in Jesus, we have God the Holy Spirit to guide us. From Him, we learn to choose, reject, pursue, and enjoy in daily life.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:27 (NIV84) "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." He makes us wise unto salvation. The closer our union with our Savior, the wiser we will become. He opens the eyes of our understanding and leads us unto all truth. The things of God are spiritually discerned and we have that Spirit when we are in Christ Jesus.

Being in Christ, we have Christ's righteousness. In our natural state we are fallen and sinful creatures like our original parents Adam and Eve. They were unable to obey one law and we share that inheritance. Isaiah tells us that all of our righteousness is filthy rags before God. Jesus tells us that there is no one that is good but God. Paul tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

If we are in Christ Jesus, he is our representative. We will address His Redeemer role in a minute. He satisfied the claims of Divine justice. His righteousness is perfect and complete. It is accepted by God the Father and has justifying efficacy. Jesus took on our sin and in return we get to take on his robe of righteousness. When our God looks at us, it is as if he is seeing the righteousness of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus. The fancy term for this is that Christ's righteousness is "imputed" to us.

This righteousness is a state of being. It is an accomplished fact. This righteousness is how we stand justified before the Almighty.

On the other hand, sanctification is an ongoing process. Holiness is the major portion of sanctification, but sanctification speaks more accurately and more fully about what is happening with believer's hearts and

lives. God the Holy Spirit is given dominion over our lives. We listen, we submit, and our union with Christ Jesus is enhanced. Sanctification includes being set apart. It includes being consecrated.

Because we are in Christ Jesus, it becomes natural for us to walk in all holy obedience to the will of God.

We must embrace the reality that we are new creations in Christ. The old self has passed away. Whatever remains of the old nature must be crucified. Remember, we have died to sin but are alive in Christ.

By attending to the ordinances of our faith and the Sacraments, we activate those channels of grace that facilitate sanctification. When we worship God corporately and privately; when we study God's word; when we spend time in relationship communication, prayer; when we celebrate fellowship with other believers; when we perform acts of mercy by blessing others; when we acknowledge our dependence on the Lord and feed that attitude of gratitude; and, when we participate in Holy Communion, we are being sanctified.

One preacher described sanctification as justification realized. We get closer and closer to the image of Jesus. The old self resists sanctification, as does the world, as does Satan.

You know you are progressing when you hate the sin you see in yourself. It grieves you because you know it grieves God. We feel the censure of crucifying Christ again. On the flip side, holiness appeals to us like the perfume of a divine orchid.

It is not just about being a reformed sinner. It is not just about being a moral person. It is a transformation by the renewing of our minds. It is a dedication of ourselves to the service and glory of God. There is more to be said, but let us move on to redemption.

Colossians 1:13-14

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

1 Peter 1:18–20 (NIV84) 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

Some ask, why redemption was listed last in 1 Corinthians 1:30 instead of first because it was Jesus paying our price on the cross that even makes possible our being "in Christ?" A good question.

Our redemption is not completely realized and it won't be until the Second Advent of Christ Jesus. 1

Thessalonians 4:16 (NIV84) For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. When this happens, we will receive our glorified bodies and will be fully redeemed along with all of creation.

CONCLUSION:

If you are in Christ, you have this wisdom given of God. Your world, your reality have been transformed.

This is the work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Over and over in scripture we are told that the Lord's blessings are to be passed through his vessels of grace.

Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." If you are in Christ Jesus, He has become for us wisdom from God. Receive your gift with joy. Use your gift of wisdom from God.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.