

Ephesians 5:15-20

I Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14

August 19, 2018

“Searching for Sophia: Where in the World is Wisdom?”

A PRAYER FOR WISDOM¹

I thought the OT lectionary scripture verse today was fitting as we are a church in prayer for wisdom and discernment in this time of transition and building a community together. Just so you know, in my sermon title, Sophia is not a girl, but is the Greek word for wisdom. I was trying to be clever.

1 KINGS 2:10-12; 3:3-14

The message of the text reveals Solomon’s desire to be a man communicating with God. At this point in his life he was not taken over by selfishness, distractions, or the allure of unlimited power. The prayer he utters shows a preoccupation with faithfulness, obedience, and fellowship with God. At this innocent time in Solomon’s life he was inviting the Almighty to rule over him. Although, later in his life he would lose sight of God and begin to give himself over to foreign gods. Here, at the beginning of his rulership, he was accountable to the true God.

Looking closer at Solomon’s prayer for true wisdom can help us too with what we should pray for as a church community

I. His prayer Is a Prayer of Praise

Solomon remembers the graciousness and kindness of a loving God. Theologian Walter Bruggemann wrote: “Solomon sets himself in the history of God with Gods people. His prayer is a recital of the long history of graciousness which reshapes and redefines this moment of prayer.

¹ From Derl G. Keefer; <https://www.ministrymatters.com/bin/11529/this-sunday-81615>

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Such prayer is never in a vacuum, but always in a context of faithful remembering and a grateful resolve to continue this family in faith.”

In other words, Life is lived to the fullest when we remember God is in charge. Our praise reaches God’s heart as we reach out in availability to him. True praise goes to him for who he is, not because of what he gives us materially. He must be the object of our adoration, reverence, and awe. Praise glorifies God.

II. It Is a Prayer of Submission (3:7)

Honest submission understands where life and power originate. This prayer waits on God.

Solomon solicits God’s power and submits to it.

Stephen Beck observed that while driving down a country road one day he came to a very narrow bridge. In front of the bridge was a sign saying, “Yield.” Since no other cars were coming he continued across the bridge to his destination.

On the return trip he came to the same one-lane bridge, but from the other direction. To his surprise there was another yield sign posted. The two signs were placed on each end to help prevent drivers from having head-on collisions.

When we submit to God for all of life, it is to avoid a head-on collision with God’s will for our lives. A quick outline to help us remember that submission is God’s plan follows:

Submission is the secret of power.

Submission is the source of praise.

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Submission is the steam of purpose.

Submission is the satisfaction of planning.

E. Stanley Jones wrote: “Life holds nothing within it which Christ has not conquered.” Solomon would have understood that perfectly.

III. It Is a Prayer of Concern (3:9)

Notice that Solomon wanted a listening heart to hear God speak. He does not ask for personal wealth, health, or power; but rather for wisdom to lead. It demonstrates a compassion and concern for the people he rules. That was his passion.

Janet Curtis O’Leary said, “Pity weeps and runs away; Compassion comes to help and stay.”

Wisdom knows the difference between the two.

IV. It Is a Prayer that God Answers (3:10-13)

The miracle of this prayer rests on God. He answered the king in a way that far exceeded Solomon’s hopes or dreams. God surpasses the minimal heart requests and gives him that for which he does not ask—riches and honor.

When we submit ourselves in faith and obedience, God will provide blessings for us beyond anything we anticipate.

FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS²

2 From Douglas Walker; <https://www.ministrymatters.com/bin/11529/this-sunday-81615>

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The Ephesians text for today shows us how to live a Christian life within a community of believers.

EPHESIANS 5:15-20

Recently I was reminded that it is important to carefully read the directions when putting together children’s toys. I had been wanting a basketball goal, so my wife and I gladly obliged. In order to save a little money we went to Sam’s Wholesale and purchased a goal that we had to assemble. I was tired (can you tell I am already making excuses?) and hurried through the complicated assembly instructions (another excuse?).

The first step stated to put one pole inside another and beat on the ground four to six times to ensure a proper mesh. My error was that I put the wrong ends together and beat furiously until I couldn’t separate the two poles. We ended up having to order another pair of poles from the manufacturer. Needless to say, I have heard from my family about the importance of carefully reading instructions.

In one sense the New Testament is an instruction manual for life. When you and I carefully read the instructions and follow them, our lives run much smoother.

In this text, the apostle Paul gives us some instructions for living the Christian life. Our task is to read carefully and to follow completely the directions we read. Notice the three clear directives in this section of Scripture.

I. Walk Wisely

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The first instruction says to be careful to walk wisely. Verse 16 clarifies that Paul most likely has in mind what we would call time management. We need to be wise in how we spend our time. In this last decade of the twentieth century, schedules are fuller and demands on time are greater than at any other period in history. Christians have the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to Christ simply by the way we choose to spend our time.

With the proliferation of calendars and other scheduling helps, time management has become an industry unto itself. Christians should think in terms of priorities when planning schedules. Part of our daily calendars ought to include quality time alone with God and with our family, ministry opportunities, as well as our regular work routine.

II. Understand the Will of the Lord

Paul’s second suggestion is to not be foolish but to understand the will of the Lord (v. 17). The context seems to indicate that this verse is linked to the preceding two verses. This verse would then relate to knowing God’s will for our lives on a daily basis.

Often we are concerned about knowing God’s will for the big things in our lives, such as job, school, or mate. God is not only interested in the big decisions of life but also in the daily development of character and our own practice of the Christian life. Knowing God’s will for how we schedule our routine every day seems to be the direction of Paul’s thought.

The big question becomes, “How do we know God’s will?” At this point Paul gives no definitive answer; however, the last three chapters of Ephesians comprise a textbook of sorts of how we ought to conduct our lives. Learning more of how we are to live the Christian life answers the

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question of what God’s will is on a daily basis. Here, being wise means that we organize our lives around the things we ought to be doing, which is the will of God for our lives.

III. Be Filled with the Spirit

The final instruction for living the Christian life that Paul writes in this passage is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We are to be controlled by the Spirit of God in the same way a drunk is controlled by alcohol. The analogy should show us the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our everyday life.

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? According to verses 19-20, three things occur when we are filled with the Spirit: we speak with joy to one another, we are joyful in our hearts, and we give thanks to God. If one is filled with the Spirit, he or she speaks to others in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The one who is filled with the Spirit also makes melody and sings in his or her own heart. Joyfulness of the inner person is the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s control. Finally, the one who is filled with the Spirit gives thanks to God for all things.

Just as following the instructions will lead to success in assembling a child’s toy, following the instructions for the Christian life will lead to successful living.

Challenge:

What are we asking God for? As individuals? As a church?

What are we giving thanks to God for? As individuals? As a church?