



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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July 20, 2008  
10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

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First Lesson: 1 Kings 3:5-12  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 119b  
Second Lesson: Romans 8:28-30  
Gospel: Matthew 13:44-52

### **Eternal Wisdom Comes from God through His Word**

This is a study of a series of lessons on the theme, Eternal Wisdom Comes from God through His Word.

Knowledge versus wisdom – the two are different. Knowledge has to do with facts. Wisdom has to do with the application of facts. As Christians, we know the facts of God's Law and His Gospel. We know what God expects of us. The Ten Commandments are not hard to read and understand, yet applying this wisdom to our daily lives is often very difficult. Our sinful nature can convince us that up is down, day is night, and unfortunately that right is wrong and wrong is right.

Our readings today help us to see what true wisdom is – knowledge of forgiveness through Jesus. They also show us that we need God's help to grow in wisdom and to use this wisdom in our daily lives.

#### **Our First Lesson:**

If you could have one superpower, what would you choose? Think about it for a minute. Maybe the power of flight sounds good to you. Think of all you could save by avoiding the gas station. Maybe you would choose super strength. That would come in handy in day-to-day life on the farm. Maybe some of you thought about super speed or the ability to read minds, or even the ability to become invisible. I think that not many of you would have thought of the superpower of super wisdom. We probably want to be more like Spiderman than like Albert Einstein.

In our First Lesson, Solomon was confronted with this choice. God came to him and offered to give him whatever he wanted – superpowers included, I suppose. Solomon's dad, King David, had recently died. Solomon was now a young man who was on his own and on the throne. David had walked close to God. God now wanted to bless his son, so this amazing offer came.

Solomon had the wisdom to know that the task before him was beyond his ability. He answered God's gracious offer by asking for the wisdom to rule God's people with a discerning heart. He asked for the ability to see what was right and wrong as he ruled. The pressure to bend God's Law for political reasons would be great. The desire for personal fame has thrown off the moral compass of many people. He asked the Lord to help him to wisely apply the knowledge that the Lord had given him. God granted his request in His grace.

God's grace has given us the knowledge that our sins are forgiven. We are in constant need of God's help to apply this knowledge wisely. We still have a sinful nature that leads us to see God's Law clearly when it applies to our neighbor, but not as clearly when it applies to us or our family. Satan wants us to believe that living together before marriage is not really a sin. We may say to ourselves, "We are doing it to avoid the sin of divorce." That is not God's wisdom.

Would you say it is okay to kill someone so that we would not sin against God by arguing with them? Of course not! God's wisdom says sin is sin. Committing one sin to avoid a sin that you feel is worse is not God's wisdom. God says all sins damn. This is why we need to be in the Word so that we will walk closer to God and see how to apply His love and forgiveness to our lives that are in agreement with His will. We also need His wisdom to show us that His love has forgiven us through Christ's life and death when He has opened our eyes to see clearly how we have disobeyed God.

### **Our First Lesson is 1 Kings 3:5-12:**

<sup>5</sup>*At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."*

<sup>6</sup>*Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.*

<sup>7</sup>*"Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. <sup>8</sup>Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. <sup>9</sup>So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"*

<sup>10</sup>*The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. <sup>11</sup>So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, <sup>12</sup>I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.*

### **Our Second Lesson:**

Knowledge is something that we can continually pursue. There is more that we can learn about the world around us that God has made. There is more that we can know about our friends and neighbors. The more we talk with them and actually listen, the more we will know. We can certainly always learn more about our God. That's why He tells us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But there will always be things about God that we will not fully know.

Our Second Lesson presents us with one of them. In it we come into contact with the Bible's teaching on predestination. That certainly is a nice fancy church word. It's not even that hard to pronounce, but to truly know what it involves completely, that is beyond our ability to fully understand. We are sinful humans. The idea that we can fully understand how God has acted from before the creation of the world is pure arrogance. We are the created beings. How can we expect to fully understand the One who created us? However, this does not mean that we cannot apply the knowledge that we have about predestination wisely.

This week's reading from Romans helps us to do this. Before we were born, before the U.S. was born, before the Garden of Eden was born, God knew that we would be His people for all eternity. He predestined us to be His people through the life and death of Jesus. He called us to be His children through the Word and Sacraments. He justified us by giving us the gift of faith to believe that what Jesus did for the world He did for us personally. Because He has done this, we can speak of being glorified in heaven in the past tense. It is certain because God's love for us in Jesus is certain. He keeps us strong. He keeps us in the faith. We walk close to Him in Word and Sacrament because of this incredible love He has for us. The closer we walk, the more wisdom we receive.

This wisdom takes the teaching of predestination and applies it to all the hurts, harms and hopelessness that we face as we live in a sinful world. Since God has loved us before He made the world, we can certainly believe that He will see to it that all things work for the good of those who love Him who have been called according to His purpose. Wisdom believes this even when the evidence that God will bring good out of evil is not yet part of our knowledge base.

He loved you and me enough to live in our place and die in our place. He loved you and me before there was water and air. He will love you and me through whatever sufferings we face. He will do more than just love us. He will do what we long to do for our children and our friends when they are hurting. He will make it work out for our good. Our good does not mean our earthly happiness. Our good does not mean that everything will turn out the way we want. Our good means that God will see to it that all things work together for our eternal benefit. Our wisdom does not know how God will do this. The wisdom of our Spirit-given faith knows that God will do this. Therefore we are confident in His love.

### **Our Second Lesson is Romans 8:28-30:**

*<sup>28</sup>And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

## **Our Gospel Lesson:**

Jesus communicated heavenly wisdom through earthly stories during his time on earth. He did it by the means of parables. Everyday events were used to teach how God works in His love to bring people to the knowledge of the truth. He used them to highlight important truths for us to know about God or ourselves as we live in God's forgiveness. The ability to understand what Jesus was teaching comes through God's gift of wisdom.

The Gospel for today contains the Parable of the Hidden Treasure, the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price and the Parable of the Net. All three deal with how we are to view God's kingdom. God's kingdom, or His saving activity in the world through the Gospel, is the most precious thing we can have. That is what the Parables of the Treasure and the Pearl teach us. It sounds simple enough. It sounds like something we would all enthusiastically nod our heads in agreement to. The question is do we live in agreement with it? Does spending time with the Word and Sacraments trump other activities in our lives? Or is it the other way around?

No generation has had more access to God's Word than ours. Yet the evidence shows that society is becoming increasingly functionally Biblical illiterates. "That's not me," you might say to yourself. "I know who David, Moses and Paul are. I can even tell you which Testament they're in." That's great, but if your neighbor or coworker can't, who besides you should be the one teaching him or her?

The Parable of the Net tells us that just going through the motions does not make us a part of the kingdom. Knowing when to stand and sit in worship, having your own pew, or being descended from a founding member of a congregation does not make you a member of God's kingdom. Lots of things are caught in the net that are not good fish. They are separated when the fishermen get back to shore. God will separate those who go through the motions from those who are His children on the Last Day.

True wisdom sees the necessity of a living and active faith in Jesus. True wisdom sees that the time, effort and offerings that are given to support the work of the Gospel are not lost to us. They enable us to find true wisdom and share it with the bad fish that are still out there. God's love for us and them compels us to work in the kingdom.

## **Our Gospel is Matthew 13:44-52:**

### ***The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl***

<sup>44</sup>"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

<sup>45</sup>"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup>When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

### **The Parable of the Net**

<sup>47</sup>"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. <sup>48</sup>When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. <sup>49</sup>This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous <sup>50</sup>and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>51</sup>"Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied.

<sup>52</sup>He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."