

Does Not Wisdom Call?

June 12, 2022

John 16:12-15

¹² “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

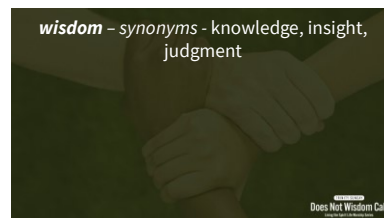
Proverbs 8:1-4 and 22-31

¹ Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? ² At the highest point along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; ³ beside the gate leading into the city, at the entrance, she cries aloud: ⁴ “To you, O people, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind... ²² “The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; ²³ I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be. ²⁴ When there were no watery depths, I was given birth when there were no springs overflowing with water; ²⁵ before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, ²⁶ before he made the world or its fields or any of the dust of the earth. ²⁷ I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, ²⁸ when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, ²⁹ when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. ³⁰ Then I was constantly at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, ³¹ rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.

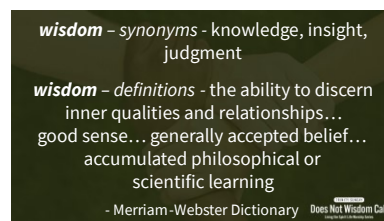


Today's message is titled, "Does Not Wisdom Call?" As we begin, let's start this time together with some synonyms for and a definition of wisdom.

Synonyms listed online for 'wisdom' include knowledge, insight, judgment. Each week at our staff gathering we read from "Who God Is". Each week there is a topic, a word. Last week, for example, the word was "Home." The author provides some synonyms and then we add any that we can think of before we go on to share the devotional. Are there any words that you would add as synonyms for wisdom other than knowledge, insight, or judgment?...



Merriam Webster defines 'wisdom' as *"the ability to discern inner qualities and relationships... good sense... generally accepted belief... accumulated philosophical or scientific learning."* These synonyms and definitions are a good place to start as we begin to explore what Jesus and God have to say about wisdom. As we do so, let us pray...



These synonyms give us a good idea of what wisdom could be. The definitions also add layers to our understanding of this concept. In the NRSV translation of the Bible, the word 'wisdom' appears 345 times. In the Old Testament the heaviest usage comes in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the two books attributed to Solomon, commonly known as the wisest man that ever lived. In these two books the word 'wisdom' appears 75 times. In the New Testament, Paul uses the word most often – 27 times in total. In the Biblical understanding of wisdom, wisdom begins and ends with a fear of the Lord.

This fear is not a fear of spiders or heights or any other earthly thing. This fear is a deep reverence, an abiding and holy respect for God and for God's word. In Proverbs 9, verses 9 and 10, Solomon puts it this way: *"Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous, and they will gain in learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."* Wisdom is not simply instruction or intelligence or knowledge or understanding. Wisdom can certainly begin with these things. Our faith begins with an understanding of God's word. Continued instruction certainly deepens our faith. As we practice our righteousness – living as God desires us to live – we learn to better practice our faith, gaining insights as we grow as disciples. All of this from Solomon certainly applies to our journeys of faith. In our Methodist understanding of discipleship, our faith also grows as we add experience and tradition to the mix.

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- Proverbs 9:9-10
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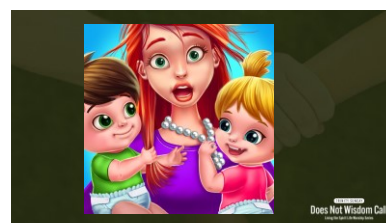
In the overall Biblical account, we see that wisdom is multifaceted. Accordingly, wisdom goes by different names. Often wisdom is connected to the Holy Spirit. In this 'definition', wisdom is first introduced at the very beginning of the book of Genesis. In verses 1 and 2 of chapter 1 we read, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."*

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."
- Genesis 1:1-2
Does Not Wisdom Call

The Holy Spirit of God has been here since the dawn of time, just as God and Jesus have been. The Spirit had a hand in the creative process and in the evolution of humanity. Because of its ancient roots, wisdom of God is one of the greatest characteristics and gifts of the Holy Spirit.



Turning to our gospel lesson for today, we see how Jesus understood the wisdom and the role of the Holy Spirit. Join me in John 16 as we spend some time in verses 12-16. Jesus spent much of his three years of ministry trying to impart wisdom to his disciples. Our gospel text is part of what is known as the “Farewell Discourse”. In these chapters, Jesus is giving his disciples some final instructions. Some have said it is like cramming for the big final exam. Some have compared it to a parent giving final instructions before their teenager heads off to prom. Others have compared this to a parent giving instructions to a first-time babysitter just before leaving their precious treasures in the hands of a near stranger. Maybe that is the most accurate description of what Jesus is attempting to do in these three chapters of John’s gospel.

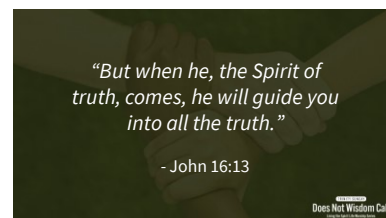


In this first-time babysitter context, Jesus is the parent, and the disciples are the babysitter. The precious treasure is the world that God loved so much that God’s only son was sent to die for it. It is no wonder that Jesus seems nervous. It is no wonder that the “Farewell Discourse” covers three whole chapters in the book of John. But there is hope for the disciples and for this growing ministry. By early in the book of Acts, as we saw last week, the babysitters quickly morph into leaders of what has lovingly become known as the church. By the end of chapter 2 the church has already grown by leaps and bounds. Remember – 3,000 were added to their number that day?



Turning to today's verses, Jesus' speech turns from instruction to promise. Yes, more instruction is needed for this group of men and women who follow Jesus. The passage begins with these words: *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear."* Jesus must have sensed that their heads were about to explode. Too much information. You know that look you get when you've babbled on for far too long at the kids, trying to impart some of your wisdom into their young lives? That was the look that Jesus was getting from the disciples.

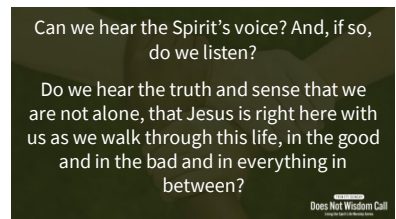
He can see that their eyes are starting to glaze over. So, Jesus pauses and says, *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth."* Because the disciples are still works in progress, Jesus promises that he will stay in touch, that he will remain with them in spirit. Jesus promises to send the *"spirit of truth"* – a spirit that is of Jesus, that speaks for Jesus and God, that will make things known to the followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit will tell the disciples what is and will also speak of what will be. This indwelling presence of Christ will lead and guide those entrusted with the faith and with the church and will empowered them to accomplish far more than any of them could have ever imagined or even dreamed.



The truth promised is truth about living in the kingdom of God, about living as a humble servant of Jesus Christ. The truth that is shared is truth about how to live as people of forgiveness and reconciliation and grace.

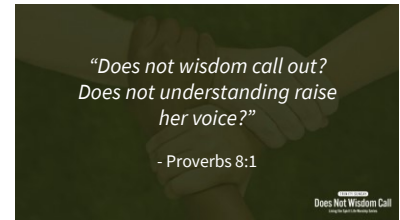
The Spirit does not give us advanced warning about how to avoid the pitfalls of life. But it will come alongside us as we struggle to climb our way out of whatever valley we find ourselves in. The Spirit will guide us as we try to stop digging our own holes, as we desire to quit sabotaging ourselves and those we love. If we are willing, the Spirit will even tell us the truth about ourselves, giving us the option to change course, to opt for a different way of living, to choose to become more like Christ instead of less like Christ. The Spirit will bring us this kind of truth and wisdom.

At this point, the questions for us are these: Can we hear the Spirit's voice? And, if so, do we listen? Do we hear the truth and sense that we are not alone, that Jesus is right here with us as we walk through this life, in the good and in the bad and in everything in between? That is the promise. It has been the promise from the beginning. God's Spirit, Christ's Holy Spirit – we can have this right here in our hearts. God's Spirit, the giver of wisdom from on high, is ours if we choose to walk in relationship with Christ.

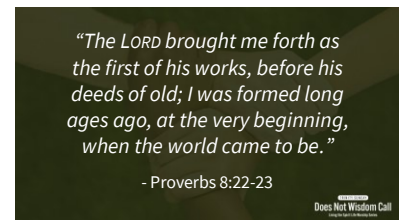


Shifting gears, we also see that wisdom is a popular topic in the Old Testament. Wisdom, as seen in the Old Testament and into the era when Jesus and the disciples lived, was an entity, a presence, a force. It is not a big leap to connect the Holy Spirit to the wisdom in the Old or New Testament. There is a reason the lectionary planners set these two passages in the same week. Turn with me to Proverbs 8 as we look at our Old Testament passage for today.

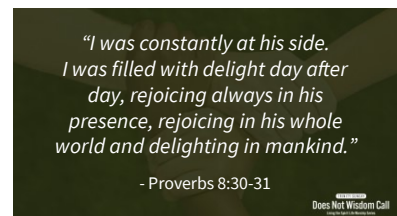
Our passage begins with these words: *“Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice?”* Solomon, the author of this text declares that wisdom seeks to be made known, seeks to bring us understanding. Continuing on, in verse 4, we see that this desire is towards all of us. Here we read, *“To you, o people, I call out: I raise my voice to all mankind.”* Like God’s love, God wants all people to have wisdom too.



It is an understanding from old, from the beginning of time, as we saw in Genesis 1 as we began this time together. In verses 22 and 23 of Proverbs 8 we read, *“The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be.”* Ever since the beginning of the world, wisdom has sought to call out to humanity. Wisdom was the first of God’s works. Wisdom, the Spirit – they are God. They are God’s voice, spoken to the world, first through the prophets and then through Jesus and, lastly, spoken into the hearts of all who believe in Christ as Lord and Savior through the Holy Spirit.



In verses 30 and 31 we hear of the intimate connection with God: *“I was constantly at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.”* Wisdom is ever with God. Can you hear the joy of being in God’s constant presence? The Spirit delights and rejoices in God’s presence. Being in God’s presence, there is also a connection to God’s creation.

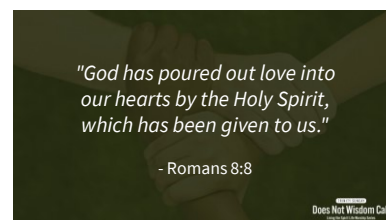


The Spirit rejoices in the creation itself and in God's supreme creation, humanity. Here we see that the Spirit cries out with the presence of God, just as the Holy Spirit cries out with the presence of Jesus Christ. Both are the presence of God, reaching out to us, seeking to connect to us, to live in close relationship with us. God desires to connect with us, God reaches out to us, God speaks to us in Spirit.

As we consider the question, "Does Wisdom Not Call?", the Biblical account and our own personal experience hopefully lead us to cry out in response, "Yes! Yes, the Holy Spirit of God and Christ calls out!" Just as the Spirit rejoices in God's presence, so too may we rejoice in the constant presence of God and Christ made real by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives.



Turning lastly to Romans 5:5 we read: *"God has poured out love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us."* The truth that we find in and through the Holy Spirit's



presence in our lives rests upon living as disciples of Christ. Living as Christ lived, we center our lives on loving God and loving others. The Spirit is love. Filled with the Spirit, may we go forth to love God and one another as Christ first loved us, each being poured out for the world just as the Spirit has been poured out into our hearts. May it be so for you and for me. Amen and amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow*. As you reflect on your journey of faith, how has your ability to hear and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit grown? How can it continue to grow?
- 2) *Pray*. How have you struggled recently to love as Christ loves you? Pray for the Holy Spirit, God's love poured into our hearts, to guide you to love well.
- 3) *Study*. Read John 16:16-24. How has receiving the Holy Spirit into your heart brought joy like Jesus speaks of in these verses? How can you share this joy?