

## 2024 Wisdom and Location

Wisdom is defined as the ability to judge what is right and true. As knowledge applied to a situation. Or colloquially at times, as common sense.

I didn't do a full word study on "wisdom" in the scriptures, but our Old Testament reading led me to one interesting aspect of wisdom that I found elsewhere in the scriptures. Wisdom plays some factor in determining where someone will be. Like, literally, in regards to location.

This may seem insignificant or maybe obvious to you. But in a world where so many people seem so lost, I thought it worth boring you with for a few minutes.

Solomon starts at Gibeon. A high place. Aka – not the tabernacle where the ark is. The high places were at best a compromise – “it's a long way to Jerusalem, we don't want to travel but we want to do the sacrifices to God, can't we do them here?” And various kings and priests said “ok.” At worst, the high places were idolatrous – where pagan sacrifices were made. This is where Solomon starts. But then he receives wisdom from God, and much more! And where does he end in our reading today? “He came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings and made a feast for all his servants.”

Wisdom brought him to where he ought to be.

This theme is common in the proverbs, as Lady Wisdom and Lady adultery both call out to the masses. Lady Wisdom brings you to a house with feasting and truth. That other lady leads you to the house that leads to death. In wisdom's house are the righteous and the those who desire instruction and rebuke (yes rebuke is in the house of wisdom – unless you want to be surrounded

by a bunch of people who “have never been wrong once in their life.” No thanks). Those folks are found in the other house with double talking, violent, quarrelsome, arrogant, and jealous.

And here we are we with our sinful natures and our own hatred, lust, and vice, and arrogance, and twisted words. Here we are in a world that is so lost. Are we fools? Are we wrong or wayward at times, or more often than not even? Wisdom would have us be honest and say – “Yes we are.” Which might bring us to a place called confession. Which is a place we’ve been to today and it is a good place to be especially since it is next door to the absolution.

And the easy move - which isn’t entirely wrong - is to say, well then, gain a little wisdom. It isn’t just a degree, it isn’t just intellect, but it isn’t *not* intellect either. It’s street smarts, sure, it’s the school of hard knocks yes, but it doesn’t despise the learned or an education either. And, if my first premise is true, it – wisdom- takes us somewhere.

And again the easy move in a sermon is to say it might beckon and call us to be in God’s Word. This One who is true and Good and the Maker of all things maybe he knows a thing or two about those things. What might his word say on vocation, on purpose, on what is lasting and meaningful? Is that a bad place to look if you feel lost? I don’t think so. I dare say it would be wise.

“I have money, I have a house and home, and yet I am still so unfulfilled!” The world cries. And the world answers it’s foolish answer, “well that’s because you need more money and a bigger house. Or more fame, or more drink.” Ask Solomon about that. The man who had everything in the world, and still was depressed and ultimately led away from God.

This is the tragic case of King Solomon. Today we see he was gifted wisdom and it brought him to the ark, where God’s promise was sure. Yet, as many of you know, the “wisdom of the world”

led him astray. It made him a fool. It led him back to compromise and worse, back to worldly foolish pursuits that led him away from the Lord. So that we sadly read, 1 Kings 11:4 For when Solomon was old his wives (lady adultery?) turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

So wisdom calls out – perhaps there is something more? Something deeper and lasting that can give hope even in this world of death.

And where might we find that hope? Perhaps the Master over Death and Life might have some comfort to guide us even, or especially, in grief or the fear of death or heartache.

You ever been to those places? Lost in the places of fear and depression, anger or grief? It's not fun.

One thing I noticed in this brief study is that wisdom doesn't just lead us to places that are fun. No, I think it leads to scary places too. Ask Jonah. He didn't want to go to Ninevah. He wanted to go the other way. But God in his wisdom, got him to where he needed to be (to put it lightly) and it was good.

The world hates this. It wants to avoid the pain. Don't look at the graveyards, distract yourself! Wisdom says, "no lets look at it and see where hope may be found in the midst of it."

And so we might take the martyrs for example. "How foolish of them to die for Jesus! All they had to do was deny Jesus with their fingers crossed and they would have lived! Those fools!" But what did wisdom tell them? It told them to make a bold confession of the truth even in scary, horrific, and painful scenarios. And where did it leave them? Dead? Or did it, by God's grace, bring them to life – life eternal?

The wisdom of God leads you toward the places where God's gifts and promises are found. The wisdom of God, says that the parents of Jesus should have expected him, the wise and good king of kings, to be in the temple where the gifts and promises of God are. And when you are afraid that you might be King Solomon and falling away, please, hearken to the wisdom of God, that calls you to his gifts and promises. Which is not a guilt trip about attendance, but it's not *not* about attendance either is it? It's about a solid and firm foundation. Afterall, the wise man builds his house at a particular location, on the rock.

And this call of wisdom is not as a cult to keep you in an echo chamber, but to equip you with the wisdom and promises to fight the good fight of faith in the places God has put you out there. So that, ultimately the wisdom of God might bring you, and others, to him – in his kingdom of life and light.

And hopefully now we begin to see that wisdom is not just self-help. It is personified. It is Jesus Christ and his gifts and work. Don't believe me? 1 Cor 1: 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,

And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the [b]disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we

preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a [c]stumbling block and to the [d]Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Jesus is the wisdom of God who has come and worked to bring you, location, to himself. He is the very wisdom that has worked through the apparent foolishness of a Cross and death, to win salvation for the world. To win a reunion with loved ones, to win forgiveness and freedom from chains of addiction and our foolish pursuits. And that has salvation has come to you in Word and water and at the table. Accidents? Or God's Wisdom, his gifts that you might know where you will be – in heaven and a new creation? Yes.

So may we be a people not ruled by guilt – “we have to do this and that or God is mad at us.”

No, may we be a people who recognize that Someone Calls, and that Someone has a Spirit that works in us, to see and hear of what is lasting and true and good and meaningful. May we be a people who celebrate that this same One has worked in real time and history to give us his gifts from the foolish cross, and the empty tomb. And may we be a people who celebrate that, though sinful and wayward though we might be, he has promised to see us safely to himself.

This is wisdom, this is Jesus, this is for you. Amen.