

“Better than jewels: for free!” 1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14

“Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. And the time that David reigned over Israel was forty years. He reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established. Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and God said, “Ask what I shall give you.” And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honour, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

I would like you to take a moment and to reflect on these questions – what does your Christian faith give you? What are the blessings, what do you value the most?

Surely the blessings are many and various, and for each one of us they may be different. For some it may be trust in the Triune God, and security about our future, for others, peace in the midst of daily troubles and burdens. Our faith takes away fear, gives us this community to belong to, good conscience of sins forgiven, and so on, and I am sure we can make this list much longer.

However, today I would like to focus on another aspect of what Christian faith gives us, which at least in my experience has been to great extent neglected. But it is also likely that many simply are not interested in it. Wisdom. God’s wisdom. This is another gift that our gracious Lord gives us. Today we heard our OT reading where the king Solomon asked for exactly that – God’s wisdom, so this is a good opportunity to reflect on this gift.

Wisdom... But is there any useful and practical wisdom in the Bible? Isn’t Christian faith about our relationships with God, and then when it comes to our lives in this world, shouldn’t we listen to other authorities? For more than two centuries this false idea has been promoted, that our faith is the very opposite of knowledge or wisdom. That our faith only deals with spiritual matters, with personal spirituality, with individual preferences. Thus, Christian faith and reason are often presented as opposites.

So many Christians have bought into this false story. So many have embraced the idea that, yes, the Church is for Sunday mornings, to satisfy our spiritual needs – whatever that means – but when we step outside the Church, we need to turn to other sources to tell us how to go about this life. We need to listen to the world.

But what did king Solomon ask from God? He had quite a challenging job. Throughout the OT we can read how stiff-necked and quarrelsome those Israelites were. Besides, they were surrounded by enemies from all sides. Now the responsibility to guide this nation, to care for those people, to organize their affairs and to build up the commonwealth of Israel had fallen on young Solomon. Very practical this-worldly challenges.

What did he ask from God? “Could you, please, satisfy my spiritual needs!” No! Solomon asked for wisdom. For down to earth practical wisdom of God for how to lead our lives. How to understand this world, how to understand people, how to lead them well.

It is interesting that in every ancient civilization which we today still remember and marvel about, there was this one virtue, this one gift that they sought keenly, that they searched for, that they valued higher than anything.

Can you guess what it was? Wisdom. It was always considered the highest form of knowledge, the highest of virtues. This is what Solomon himself later said about wisdom: **“For wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.”** (Proverbs 8:11) **“Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding.”** (3:13)

Why to value wisdom so highly? Because wisdom brings so many gifts. It comes, we could say, as a bundle deal. True wisdom brings us all embracing well-being; emotional, relational, intellectual, economical, spiritual well-being.

You have heard this famous saying as it appears quite a few times in the OT. **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”** Just a few comments on this one. **“The fear”** ... it is not about being scared or afraid. It is about acknowledging who our God is.

This infinite, almighty, holy, uncontrollable, sovereign force, who brought the whole Universe into existence. This fear is about proper attitude to that person – awe, wonder, deepest respect and reverence, recognizing that we are His creatures, a dust in His hand.

“The fear of the Lord”. This is important; this is not about fearing some generic higher being or universal force, it is about being in awe before the God who has revealed Himself, who has given us His name, who has invited us to turn to Him, to pray to Him, to trust Him and to rely on Him. We could say that this is about humility, obedience and openness before the God Revealed. And what is the name of this God? We know Him as Jesus Christ. It is Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, who in the OT speaks of Himself as the Wisdom. (See Proverbs 8).

It is Him who is called wisdom in the NT. It is Him in whom there are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3). Jesus Christ. Divine wisdom. Our wisdom. We don't usually think about Jesus as about our wisdom. But it is Him who reveals to us what otherwise would remain hidden. He reveals to us what the world cannot know. Without Jesus there is no true wisdom and true understanding.

By now you may be thinking: “Can this be true, or is our pastor just making this up?!” Let’s see. Our God reveals Himself as the Creator. But He doesn’t just create, He orders His creation so that it functions in a certain way according to His wise design.

His design for His creation is incredibly intelligent, and it is also intelligible. This acknowledgement gave birth to modern science. The belief that the laws of our Creator are accessible and intelligible to us. But science alone, whatever wonderful and exciting it may be, or we could say the human reason alone, whatever brilliant it may be, cannot answer the most important, the most profound questions that there are.

Without God revealing those answers we cannot know them. What are those questions? Here they come. *What is this world?* Where did it come from? Is it good or not? Human reason can’t answer these questions. But we know that it was brought into existence by the benevolent Creator, it is created and designed for us, so that we can enjoy the loving fellowship with our God, and it is designed and created as good, as very good.

Next – *who are we?* Who am I? Today in the West people have rejected God the Creator and the society is going mad. We can’t answer this question. Science can’t answer this question, human reason can’t answer this question. Who am I? So, what do we say? It seems that the devil, which means – the one who confuses – has come to help. That’s why we have come to the point where children in schools in Australia are taught that the biological reality of our bodies doesn’t matter, that we can be whoever we want to be.

What is meant by that? That you can be whatever you choose to be. And these “whatevers” are not restricted by male and female; it appears there is a host of mythical creatures in between, and now children are encouraged to pick and choose their identity.

Who am I? Our God reveals that He has created each one of you, as infinitely important for Him. He personally knitted you together in your mother’s womb. As He does with every child who is conceived. He created you as His emissaries in this world, and He has created us for great and joyous tasks. More than that, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, has redeemed you and rescued you from the prison to sin and death paying the ultimate price, giving up His life for you, so that we could live out fully what we are created to be.

Next big question – why are we here? Human reason, science and philosophy can’t answer this question. We know that you are created for this great commission. **“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”** (Gen 1:28) This is huge! What does this mean?

You are created to participate in God’s work of creation. We are endowed with breathtaking abilities to create new human beings and to raise up the next generations. We are created for wonderful callings in marriage and family. We are created to take care of this planet. To explore it, to discover its secrets, and to lovingly serve God’s creation. These are incredible responsibilities, and our God the Creator provides abundant and wise instruction for all of this.

Without God revealing these answers to us, we cannot know them. Without us, Christians, revealing these answers to the world, they cannot know them. Without God’s wisdom we all remain in the darkness of our sinful foolishness.

The awe before the God Revealed, and our openness to listen to Him is the beginning of all true wisdom. The fulness of this wisdom is accessible only to those who belong to Jesus' inner circle, only to the members of His family, to us.

The world cannot know this wisdom. Human reason cannot know it. Only our God Jesus Christ reveals it to us as fully as possible. And what is amazing, He doesn't hide this wisdom, it's not reserved for a select few. He wants everyone to come and drink from this font of wisdom until their fill. He wants to bring everyone into His inner circle. But... the world is not interested. What about the world, even Christians are seldom interested!

There is nothing sadder than the Bible covered in dust. The treasures of wisdom remain... hidden treasures. Woe to us! The heights and the depths of human foolishness! We are not exempt from it. Do you remember what was the original temptation in the garden of Eden? The serpent convinced Eve that she will gain more wisdom by not listening to God's Word. By not listening to what our God speaks to us. This has been our state since. We believe that we will be wiser and better off if we don't listen to our Creator and Redeemer God, or better yet, if we deny His very existence. Here we are...

Most of you are parents. Imagine parents who have accumulated the best wisdom and want to give it to their children, and children just wouldn't listen. How painful it is, and we actually witness it happening all the time. This is our Father's ongoing pain and anguish with us. This is what Jesus, who is the Wisdom of God, gets from us day by day. We have no time for this wisdom. For there is TV, and Internet and so much rubbish that we need to take in and consume... there is no time for God's wisdom.

But, for those who have ears, for those who desire to humbly listen to our all-wise God, there is an infinite world of His wisdom waiting for us. If we don't silence the whispers of the Spirit Creator in us, He opens for us this life-long adventure, this incredible journey around the Word. Then we are invited, accompanied with the most fitting guide – the Spirit of wisdom and truth Himself – to explore the treasures of this Creator God, day after day being surprised and excited by new insights and by new discoveries.

That is a never-ending adventure, no life-time will suffice to discover all the gems that are waiting for us, and as we embark on this travel, we can be certain, that searching for and following the Divine Wisdom in this age is only the beginning, this exciting journey will have the second phase. Then we will meet the Divine Wisdom as a person, as our Lord and Teacher and Brother Jesus Christ, and there the excitement of marvelling at the Divine Wisdom and all His works and words will never end.

I pray that the Holy Spirit would help us all to hear this cry: **"How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will fools hate knowledge? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you."** (Proverbs 1:22-23)

That is the Divine Wisdom calling you. May the Spirit of God help us to join the humble prayer of Solomon, so that we too can taste at least a little bit of what was given to him, for this wisdom is sweeter than honey and makes wise even the simple.

Amen.