

“Wisdom is a Gift”

Ephesians 1:3-14

All three of our readings speak of wisdom. Solomon asked for a wise and discerning mind so that he would recognize good from evil and govern the people under his authority in a way that benefits them. After all, having authority means having the burden of doing what is best for those under your authority.

St. Paul speaks of wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of God’s eternal will. This comes solely by His grace. It is revealed according to His purpose. It is a gift. It is a byproduct of faith. Having faith is to “fear, love, and trust in God.” The Psalmist says, “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” [Ps. 111:10].

Luke tells us that the child Jesus grew and was filled with wisdom. Of course He was filled with wisdom, He is God – after all. And He amazed the teachers of the Law who were listening to Him.

Where does wisdom come from? It comes from listening to God. It comes by the grace of God. It is a gift from God. Wisdom does not come naturally pouring out of your own heart. Our self-centered, “it’s all about

me” world tells you again and again, “listen to your heart.” No, don’t do that!! When I listen to my heart, I end up sinning, because that is what my heart tells me to do.

In regard to spiritual matters, don’t listen to your heart until your heart has listened to the Word of God. This means that your heart has to be actively involved with the Word of God – otherwise you are just listening to your own sinful self.

Wisdom is a gift from God, and our sinful heart wants nothing to do with it. Your sinful heart wants you to think about what is best for you. This is not the wisdom of Solomon. Your sinful heart thinks that what is best for you is what is easy for you. Satan wants to give you an “easy button.” He tried the same thing with Jesus. But there was no easy shortcut.

Redemption would only come through His blood.

Wisdom tells us that the good things of life are **not** easy. Jesus Himself tells us that the broad and easy road leads to destruction. Faith in Christ is **not** easy; bearing the cross is **not** easy; denying the desires of your sinful heart is **not** easy; placing the needs of others above your own is **not** easy. Raising children is **not** easy. Whenever we seek to make things easy, we end up failing. Rarely has anything which truly has value come without work.

Because of our increasingly full schedules, our culture has developed the outsourcing of important and difficult things. Some of this is good. I am glad I don't have to go and cut firewood every day. But some of this has been very destructive to the family and, even more, the faith of the family.

The intellectual formation of our children is outsourced to the schools. I am not saying we shouldn't have schools, but how many parents regularly discuss historical events – especially ones that affect the church – or discuss even the news of the day with their own children? It is a shame to leave them in ignorance because there will be many others in their life who will attempt to mold and shape their thinking – and most of them will not be friendly toward the church.

For athletic development, we send our kids to Little League, soccer camps, traveling volleyball teams. This is not bad, in and of itself. In fact, there is much good that happens in these programs. Sports and competition teach good lessons. But how much parent/child interaction happens outside of dropping them off and picking them up?

For spiritual formation, children are sent to Sunday School, VBS, youth group. Again, these programs are not the issue. This issue is that parents, fathers in particular, are not raising their children within the church – worshiping with them, teaching them the liturgy, praying with them,

speaking in your home about what Christ has done. This is not easy. And sometimes, even when this is faithfully done, the Word is not heard.

However, through the outsourcing of spiritual formation, the typical lesson that has been learned, in recent decades in particular, is that giving attention to God is a part-time issue at best. Worshiping God has been made easy. Show up to church every now and then; have the kids participate in a few activities. Bearing the cross becomes no burden at all. Wisdom should tell us that a cross that is no burden is not a cross.

All parents and guardians, fathers in particular (because you are the ones who will be held accountable), have the burden of authority to hold the Word of God before the eyes of their children and show them that this is important. You cannot force anyone to come to faith, but your vocation, as a person with authority, is to be a faithful witness of the forgiveness and grace of God. When we outsource the task of bearing witness to other people (to our children in particular), this is not done in the spirit of wisdom. Christ died for them. They are worth the time. They are so worth the time. And for them, and for you, there are eternal consequences involved.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is a gift from God. Cherish that gift you have been given. And Jesus says, "Take up your cross and follow Me." Amen.