

# “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 unless you first tell your heart to listen 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 heart wants your life to be 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.

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?

For athletic development, we send them to Little League, soccer camps, volleyball at the CYO. 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 those venues?

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 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, 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 (our children in particular), this is not done in the spirit of wisdom. Christ died for them. They are worth the time.

Sending your kids to good schools and youth programs inside and outside the church will help to form good children who have solid moral centers. However, we see the fruits of this experiment as the vast majority of these good, moral children have little or no interest in taking up the cross and following Jesus.

They might show up for the Children’s Christmas Program because it reminds them of their youth, or because this is what “good, moral people” do. They might send their own kids to Vacation Bible School, because this

is what good, moral people do. But they have rejected the adoption of their Baptism. They have forgotten the cost of the blood of Christ that redeemed them.

Up until recent days, I truly thought “in my heart” (which was part of the problem) that today’s young people would be like previous generations. Many of them would meander away from Christ and His Church for a while and then come back when they established their own family or acquired some wisdom.

Now, I am quite convinced that they will not come back **on their own**. I see now that the imagination of my heart was false to begin with. Lost sheep never go out looking for the shepherd.

What saddens me is that, like you, I have so many friends and family who do not trust in the redemption through Christ’s blood, the forgiveness of sins, the riches of His grace. If they did, they would be joining with angels, arch-angels and all the company of heaven around the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ at the Lord’s Table here or in another gathering of the saints. But they are not gathering with the saints.

Thankfully, it is not my job to do the sorting on the Last Day. However, it has become increasingly clear that the majority of the recent generation, even though they or their family may think they are, they are **not** a part of the company of saints. And it frightens me, and this saddens me. Christ died for them. He went to the cross for them.

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.