

## **“Wisdom from on High” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Christmas 2 January 4, 2026**

- I. **Ephesians 1:7-10** – “<sup>7</sup> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, <sup>8</sup> which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth in.”
- II. **Everyone in the world wants wisdom**, but not all define wisdom the same.
  - a. The trouble is that wisdom comes in different forms and from different places... as some is from God and some is from the world.
  - b. We see this frequently even among churches as the wisdom that seems to be working for the world is used in the congregational setting.
    - i. I read about a church that started to get very concerned that their attendance was declining.
    - ii. Leaders of the church were faithful and genuinely wanted to see more people come to church, so they formed a plan that seemed wise.
    - iii. They studied successful corporations and organizations... they brought in consultants... they learned all about branding and demographics in their area...
    - iv. Next, they redesigned their worship space... they went over every program and made them less difficult and more accessible... and they also adjusted their services to make them less formal.
    - v. For a while, attendance did increase... but other things began to fade...
      1. Bible study attendance declined, the prayer and private devotion life of the members decreased, people’s giving of time, talent, and treasure declined, and witnessing about Jesus as the Savior and the importance of His death and resurrection declined.
    - vi. Although the congregation was still busy carrying out their plan, they lost focus on the reason for their existence in the first place.
    - vii. After a while of watching all these things take place, a member said something that made everyone stop and think... “We’re growing, but I’m not sure what we’re growing *into*.”
  - c. You see, on paper, or from a worldly standpoint, this church had been wise, but the problem was they confused doing the right procedures with mission... and counting people in the pews with faithfulness.
    - i. The Church that Jesus Christ began is not about marketing, competing, or maximizing profit... the Church exists because God has already done the work by acting in Jesus.

- ii. We cannot maximize or manufacture growth... we can only pray for God's will to be done and receive whatever comes to us.
  - iii. This doesn't mean that we cannot use systems and strategies that work for business... it means we cannot put our trust in them as the answer to God's kingdom growth.
- d. God does not entrust His saving plan to strategies, systems, or human insight.... He sets it forth in Christ, and in Christ alone, to unite all things to Himself.

III. **Today's readings remind us of God's wisdom as it is revealed and given.**

- a. In Ephesians, it doesn't say that humanity reasoned its way into God's plan of salvation... using every system and strategy at their disposal.
  - i. No, Paul says that God acted in "all wisdom and insight" and "made known the mystery of His will."
  - ii. We must humbly accept that God is the one in charge with the ultimate wisdom, and we can only do so much without Him.
    - 1. In other words, we are insufficient in our thoughts, words, and deeds when it comes to God...
- b. King Solomon is a great example of admitting he was insufficient.
  - i. He doesn't ask for wealth or power... he admits his inadequacy and powerlessness... so he asks for wisdom to govern in God's will.
  - ii. God granted him the wisdom, along with wealth and power in addition... but even the one we call the wisest person ever (Solomon) could not redeem sinners.
  - iii. His wisdom was a foreshadowing of what was to come, and what we celebrated on Christmas with the arrival of God's plan.
- c. It's also important to note that God's wisdom might confuse or even trouble us... just look at the Gospel reading and Jesus staying behind.
  - i. I'm sure Mary and Joseph were emotionally and physically worn down when they finally got to their Son who had gone to the temple instead of joining the caravan to Nazareth.
  - ii. They found Him in the temple, acting according to His Father's will.
  - iii. As His parents, it might have been very difficult not to ground Him for a month... pulling a stunt like that... but again, it was God's will.
- d. We often wonder how certain situations can work out... especially when God's plan doesn't feel safe... or efficient and orderly... or out of alignment with the world's expectations.
  - i. Being a Christian isn't always safe... we were just talking about one of our mission trips to Guatemala the other night, when someone shot into the bus we were riding in...
  - ii. God's wisdom isn't always efficient either – because He might have us spending a great deal of time and energy so that just one person might hear the Word and come to faith... out of 100's of hours of planning and volunteer time, and even expenditure.

- iii. God doesn't go by the world's expectations either, as He often teaches that His design living, or caring for others, or what is valuable directly contradicts popular opinion.
- e. The point for us as God's chosen people is to place our trust in the wisdom and insight that He has given us – revealed to us – through His Word.

- IV. **When we hear and read the fullness of God's Word** and what He has done for us, the wisdom from on high opens our hearts to faith and trust in Him.
- a. Just listen to the power and Good News in these words from Ephesians:
    - i. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us..."
      - 1. The redemption is a ransom paid to get us out of bondage to sin and death...to be acquitted of our offenses against God... and the price paid was the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross.
      - 2. Then it says that God gives this forgiveness according to the riches of His grace that He overflows into us.
        - a. I'm reminded of the Lord's Supper as we receive the very body and blood of Jesus... as His grace overflows into us.
    - ii. After lavishing forgiveness and grace into us it goes on to say, "...in all wisdom and insight [He made] known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth."
      - 1. God provides and reveals the wisdom and insight that makes known the mystery of what He wants, or what He desires to happen... and that mystery is Jesus Christ. (Col. 1:27; 2:2)
      - 2. And finally, God's plan was to "unite all things in Christ", which is the wonderful blessing that all people of every nation and background... can be brought together as one body when they believe in Jesus as their Savior.
  - b. These powerful words of Scripture remind all of us of the amazing grace of God, who gave His only Son to pour out His blood and die for us... so that we might be freed from our sin... forgiven... You are forgiven in Christ.
    - i. Not only that, but this is a mystery that can only be revealed by God to those who have faith... so this wisdom and insight is only from Him and revealed to us in the Scriptures alone.
    - ii. God's wisdom is simply foolish to those without faith (1 Cor. 1:18ff), but faith and wisdom are gifts as He pours out His grace and mercy.
    - iii. God's wisdom is not something we earn or figure out on our own... it is something God has already been revealed... and given as a gift in His Son.
  - c. In Christ, God has redeemed us through His blood, forgiven our trespasses, and lavished grace into us beyond measure.

- i. So, here is the wisdom from on high: not a plan we must complete, but a salvation already accomplished in Jesus Christ. Amen