

**“Wisdom for Life” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Epiphany 4 – January 29, 2023**

- I. **1 Corinthians 1:18** – <sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
- II. **It happens all around the country and world every day...**
  - a. Someone is getting ready for an appointment, for work, or maybe school.
    - i. Usually time is slipping away, and the stress is mounting.
    - ii. At the last minute, they run out the door and quickly realize... it's below freezing or it snowed, and the car needs a 15 minute warm up to safely drive.
    - iii. Many police departments warn people that they cannot just scrape a basketball sized hole through the snow and ice on their windshield and drive away...
      - 1. In fact, they call it “peephole driving”.
    - iv. I took a picture of a news story from Washington during December's snow and ice storm... [picture of car with snow and “peephole”]
      - 1. This person was driving down a freeway!
    - v. The problem is usually being ill-equipped, or maybe running late.
    - vi. I can't tell you how many times living in the high country of Colorado that I didn't plan enough time to drive safely – and used the slow driving warm up (hoping the frost would clear in a couple of blocks).
  - b. It seems like we would recognize the danger of peephole driving and avoid it at all costs – but many of us use all kinds of shortcuts – like spraying the windshield with wiper fluid or scraping small openings with a random objects because we don't have a real ice scraper.
    - i. The limitation of only seeing straight ahead leaves us with blind spots and dangers all around us.
    - ii. I suppose this is a good picture of someone who doesn't know the Scriptures, but also fails to exercise them.
- III. **St. Paul touches upon knowledge, wisdom, and power** in our letter today.
  - a. The Corinthian church was port city located in modern day Greece.
  - b. You might say it was metropolitan, with a lot of new building... Greek and Roman influence.... and wealth.
    - i. In a way, it became an ancient Panama Canal because the Corinth Canal allowed ships to take a short cut.
    - ii. Corinth was made up of people from all over the modern world who traveled through, educated members of society, and that meant many different religious views.
    - iii. Greek influence usually meant that wisdom and knowledge were important – and many famous philosophers were Greek -
      - 1. In fact, the word philosophy means love of wisdom

- c. So to sum up Corinth, you have people from all over the world, all types of religious views, and educated citizens who valued knowledge and wisdom.
  - i. Which is where their power often came from.
- d. Paul is straightening some things out for the church in Corinth by writing a letter that we use to this very day as Christians.
  - i. Certainly, all these viewpoints and attitudes led to many broken relationships in the church, and Paul wants them to be unified...
  - ii. But he also shares the underlying power to make everything right – even in a place like Corinth! – the cross of Jesus.
- e. Most scholars would agree that 1 Corinthians 1:18 is the key theme or verse for the rest of the letter – “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”
  - i. To put it in another way, Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and the way we talk about this truth is foolish to those who don’t believe in God, but for us who do.... God’s power saves us!
  - ii. It’s not delivering some slick presentation that will convince someone – eloquent words of knowledge and wisdom – but the Holy Spirit at work in the foolishness of the cross that changes a person’s heart.
- f. Yet, what is all this foolishness about?
- g. Should we set aside learning and knowledge and wisdom because God will take care of all that for us?
  - i. The answer is absolutely not – we cannot help but speak of what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20) and our Gospel message has great power – even the power to save (Romans 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18).
  - ii. Also, in Proverbs 1:7 it says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
    - 1. In other words, looking to God is the first place we gain knowledge.... And we SHOULD appreciate and seek knowledge and wisdom (as long as God is a part of that)

IV. **What’s the difference between knowledge and wisdom?**

- a. I usually say that knowledge is accumulated information, while wisdom is applying that information in the best way.
- b. A teenager might learn all there is to know about cars and driving by studying and taking tests, but wisdom is putting that knowledge to use by driving and making good decisions.
- c. A person might know all about how to use a gun, but wisdom is needed to discern when a gun should be used.
- d. Our confirmation students might memorize and know the Ten Commandments and their meaning forward and backward... but wisdom obeys them.
- e. I’ve told this story many times, but when we went to the Holy Land, our guide was Jewish.

- i. He took us all over Israel and had a great depth of knowledge about the Bible.
  - ii. His Bible was so well worn and used – most pastors' Bibles wouldn't look that beat up – and he knew Scripture better than most pastors...
  - iii. Yet, our guide was not a Christian, and for all his knowledge of God and His plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, the cross was foolish to him.
- f. The point of knowing Scripture is not so we can guide people through the Holy Land or show off to people around us about how smart we are to quote the Bible – it is not strictly about knowledge – It is about a loving relationship.

V. **After all the knowledge, wisdom inspires us to love God.**

- a. Putting all the pieces we learn from Scripture, as the Holy Spirit continues to give us inspiration through our faith, will grow a wisdom in us that naturally loves God.
- b. We can robotically state John 3:16 because we memorized it, or we can take all that it means together, and our wisdom from God takes it to a whole other level.
  - i. God so loved the world
    - 1. (that means me personally)
  - ii. that He gave His only Son
    - 1. (His plan of salvation which sacrificed His Son on a cross and the foolishness of dying to win)
  - iii. so that whoever believes in Him
    - 1. (again, whoever is me, as I was brought to faith by the power of the Holy Spirit, His Word spoken, and my Baptism)
  - iv. would not perish
    - 1. (we would not be cast away from God's presence in hell in the hopeless condition of our sins)
  - v. but have eternal life.
    - 1. (we are not bound by death or eternal destruction – but we are going to live with our loving God without end.)
- c. I am saved by God's grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9) and I love and obey God because He gives me the wisdom to put what I know into practice.
  - i. If we go back to the freezing cold vehicle with a tiny peephole to see the world – that is knowing many things but not using our wisdom.
  - ii. Christians oftentimes don't take the daily opportunity to live out our faith with God at the helm.
  - iii. As I am saved by grace through faith, how does that practically work in my day-to-day life?
    - 1. Without the knowledge of the Bible, how can I have any knowledge to apply? (which is wisdom)

2. As I'm more and more acquainted with the Scriptures, then my life begins to reflect the love of God and love toward neighbors – as I apply this knowledge.
- d. God's way of working is so different from the world around us, we must spend our time getting to know Him through the Bible, in worship, in study and prayer – as He grants us wisdom for life.
- e. Try it out, and you will see how much better life is when you can see clearly through all your windows! Amen.

