

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. 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 his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal 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 should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, 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 today. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

Psalms 111

1 Hallelujah!

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, *
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the deeds of the LORD! *

they are studied by all who delight in them.

3 His work is full of majesty and splendor, *

and his righteousness endures for ever.

4 He makes his marvelous works to be remembered; *

the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

5 He gives food to those who fear him; *

he is ever mindful of his covenant.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works *

in giving them the lands of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice; *

all his commandments are sure.

8 They stand fast for ever and ever, *

because they are done in truth and equity.

9 He sent redemption to his people;

he commanded his covenant for ever; *

holy and awesome is his Name.

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; *

those who act accordingly have a good understanding;

his praise endures for ever.

Ephesians 5:15-20

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 6:51-58

Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

We had a guest at the Jones house in the 110 days week. Rick found her first, tucked up and resting from the heat in the shady rafters under our deck. Smart move! It was a little owl – about 8 inches tall and probably one of the set of triplets that watched us from our big juniper tree weeks ago. This little one was back – And out of reach and out of the sun. Wise for a little bird. The Animal Rescue folks told us not to worry as this young owl was big enough to fend for itself.

Every day one of us would peek– take a picture. He – or maybe she – didn't seem phased by us.

We showed our little Juni. She, not knowing much about owl lore, was not so impressed. So much of what we value comes through our context and she's not yet privy to that information.

Our context? Owls are rare and protected. They're mysterious, flying silently through the night. If you're a mouse or a squirrel, they're dangerous. Myth and legend call them wise.

Harry Potter's got an owl companion, Hedwig. She's his guide – his messenger – and in the end, his protector.

King Arthur's wizard, Merlin, often is shown with an owl. He's got a name, too: Archimedes. The perfect foil for a wizard, Archimedes is portrayed as alert and involved to the point of snarky sometimes and cranky others – Sometimes ignoring the whole mess around him. Now that can be wise!

And of course, there's Owl in Winnie the Pooh. Pretentious – fluffed up. With some knowledge but not quite enough – or right enough – to justify his own opinion or verbosity. Silly old Owl.

The notion of the Wise Owl is in lots of cultures – For us, it all seems to go back to the Greek goddess of war, Athena. Athena actually works to keep the peace and avert war. That's Wise. No surprise she's also the goddess of wisdom.

Among the symbols of Athena's wisdom is an owl, even stamped on the Greek drachma. Athena's owl is pictured looking away from her gaze – indicating that the owl is looking for what might not be in Athena's sight.

I think that brings us to a good start as we think about wisdom today.

Wisdom: What does it mean to have Wisdom?

It's the request of King Solomon in our first reading. It's the message of our Psalm – and its description fills today's alternate reading in the lectionary from Proverbs. Paul tells us how to live as wise people. And Jesus reminds us of the vehicle: Bread!

So just what do we learn about wisdom from them?

First – From Solomon's request and God's reply, we learn that seeking wisdom pleases God.

For Solomon's conversation with God was not about more for himself – He did not ask for more monies and power and the things that make us feel safe and in control. He did not ask for vengeance, nor for victory.

Solomon already had so much, living in to the promises of God as David's own son. Solomon's eyes and mind saw beyond what so many see, recognizing all that he had, and he was grateful.

Instead, Solomon asked God for a discerning mind to govern the people among whom God had placed him. Solomon understood the responsibility of his position and he sought to make good decisions - to know the difference between good and evil – that he would know what to do with all that God gives.

Solomon went into partnership with God: God's steward – learning and listening and ready for God's way.

And God was pleased. God granted Solomon wisdom – the discerning mind to make each and every decision as God's own – considering the We beyond the Me.

Wisdom we see, comes in ongoing life seeking the good and the right in each day as part of the people of God.

Our Psalm, as old as Solomon, goes on to describe what is in this wisdom.

"...faithfulness and justice; all his commandments are sure.

They stand fast for ever and ever, because they are done in truth and equity."

Wisdom: the way to decisions that are faithful – just – truthful – and fair. Wisdom: the way of the Kingdom of God

Wisdom is living in God. The Psalmist continues: *"The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom."* Be sure to read that word fear as awe – respect – otherness. For wisdom is about living *into* God – not cowering.

And Paul tells the churches they are to live in ways different from the world – for the ways of the world, he writes, are evil. And just what is evil? Whatever takes us from God and becomes its own first-prized, first-sought Love and idol. Love of money. Love of power – love of domination – love of revenge – love of my way and winning – love that breaks community – Expectation rather than gratitude.

So we're learning of wisdom here in a round about way. From the wise old owl – through the Bible – and maybe – to us. What does it mean to have wisdom?

I canvassed the family last week – "What is Wisdom?" I asked.

Rick spoke of decision-making – and separating the signal from the noise. That sounds like the search for truth. Yes – That's a goal of wisdom.

Adam told me what it wasn't, including that age did not necessarily confer wisdom. Another true observation for we will get older, yet not necessarily wise.

Maggi replied "Sophia," speaking the name for Wisdom in the Old Testament, and the Name of God the Mother – the third part of our Trinity – Hagia Sophia – the Holy Spirit. And that is truth. She named love – and Jesus as synonyms for wisdom. Hooray for a theologian in the family!

Ricky gave me a practical application: Reinhold Niebuhr's 'Serenity Prayer' that is familiar to so many of us. *"God, give me grace to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can change, and the wisdom to know the difference."*

J'aime mentioned a term used in medicine and more: Gestalt. Gestalt is the understanding that any situation is more than the sum of its parts. In her world, it's a combination of knowledge, experience, pattern recognition, and intuition that one tests in seeking healing.

And, from the far reaches of the Universe, Indy: *"It's about knowledge – and Wisdom. Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad."*

So funny – And so right on. For we can have so much data – make it even into useful information – And we have more knowledge at our fingertips than we can ever absorb and it keeps growing. But Wisdom is knowing what to do with it. Wisdom is using it all – the knowledge – our experience and the experiences of the world and history — and our intuition that is unconsciously putting it all together in the whispers of the Holy Spirit. Wisdom comes as we seek each step and place our hopes and goals toward the goodness – love – justice – peace – and awe that is God.

And you and I may taste it. Must seek it. And will never fully attain it, for Wisdom is God's alone. We are wise only when we, like Solomon, are partners - God's stewards – learning and listening and ready for God's way.

It's life's ongoing way, living into wisdom, for wisdom asks us to discern God's way in all of the choices of each day about which we speak so often.

It's wisdom for which we pray, not telling God our plans so much as asking that we discern God's plans. It's about living life well and making the right choices. Doing right things for the right reasons.

As you think of Wisdom, remember these marks:

- Wisdom seeks truth
- Wisdom seeks goodness
- Wisdom is brave.

Wisdom knows how much we do not know. Our wisdom is a search in and with God in hope: a process, not an endpoint. Wisdom listens – Wisdom absorbs – Wisdom pays attention.

And true Wisdom is self-aware, knowing that we do not and cannot know every thing and every context and every consequence of our choices. True wisdom is humble and continues to listen. For those who are truly wise know that always, that we might be wrong.

So we seek wisdom, daring to discern and daring to act, though our humanity means there are times when we will be wrong and our decisions will fail. Yet as partners with God, even our failures become our learning as God lifts us into hope – to stand again in the love of Jesus the Christ, the wisest guy who ever lived and who teaches the way to live in the Kingdom. Walking in the kindness of love.

Here's a measure: What's happened in your life when you've lived in Jesus' way? And how's it gone for you when you didn't? There's great wisdom-building experience. I know that when we live in Jesus' way, life is so much better. He got it right. Wise up! Live and learn, *"giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* **Amen.**