

Rev. Janet Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
13th Sunday after Pentecost  
Sunday, August 18, 2024  
Scripture: Ephesians 5: 15-20  
Sermon: Living Wisely

The movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* was a good movie. Indy learns Henry, his father, has disappeared while searching for the Holy Grail. Walter Donovan, his father's financial backer, tasks Indy with finding both Henry and the Grail. Indy receives a package containing Henry's diary, which includes his research on the Grail. One of my favorite scenes, towards the end of the movie is when the protector of the Holy Grail tells the seekers, "But choose wisely, for while the true Grail will bring you life, the false Grail will take it from you." One of the seekers was a "Nazi" who went first and chose one of the many chalices in the room thinking it was the one. Does anyone remember what kind of chalice he chose?

After Donovan, the "Selfish Greedy Fellow," drank from the false chalice, he disintegrated and died and the Knight guarding the Holy Grail simply said: "He chose poorly."

Of course our hero Indiana Jones chose a simple chalice without all the silver or gold and jewels. He chose one fit for a carpenter. And the Holy Grail Knight said to Indiana Jones, "You chose wisely!"

Having wisdom is choosing wisely. But like the story of Indiana Jones, there are at least 2 types of wisdom to choose from. What type of wisdom did Donovan the Nazi choose? Donovan chose based on "worldly" wisdom!

Christians are to be children of wisdom! There is worldly wisdom and there is Godly wisdom.

The Greek word for **wisdom** is "Sophia" and it has two meanings. The wisdom which belongs to the world and secondly the supreme wisdom that belongs to God.

Jesus said, "Wisdom is proved right by all her children." And since there are two possibilities for wisdom in that statement, a person becomes a child of the wisdom they choose. A person who chooses the wisdom of

the world becomes a child of the world. A person who chooses the wisdom of God, becomes a child of God!

So, what does this have to do with our lives today?

If we claim to be Christians, believers of Christ, we are children of God! If we are children of God, then we are to choose the wisdom of God not the world! How are we doing? We are bombarded with the wisdom of the world every day!

In Matthew 7:24-27 Jesus told a story about two builders. One was known as the Wise Builder and the other the Foolish Builder. Matthew 7 says, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

What is the difference between these two builders? Well, both hear God's words, but only the wise builder builds his house using God's blueprints and his plans.

Max Lucado writes about this in his book **Unshakable Hope** that we will be studying in the Fall study series.

He says, "Two people set out to build their houses. The first went to RPF Home Supply: Regrets, Pain and Fear. He ordered lumber that was rotted by guilt, nails that were rusty from pain, and cement that was watered down with anxiety. Since his home was constructed with RPF supplies, every day was consumed with regret, pain and fear.

The second builder chose a different supplier. She secured her supplies from Hope Incorporated. Rather than choose regret, pain and fear, she found ample promises of grace, protection, and security. She made the deliberate, conscious decision to build a life from the storehouse of hope. Which of the two builders was wiser? Which of the two builders was happier? Which of the two is most like you?" (page 12)

Augustine of Hippo "understood wisdom most importantly as the person of Christ, the One in Whom all things hold together."

"Christ has become for us wisdom from God." (1 Cor. 1:30)

The Apostle Paul says in the letter to the Ephesians that wisdom comes to us through the Holy Spirit of God.

Today, we are looking at Paul's admonition to the Ephesians asking them to live wisely: Ephesians 5:15-17

*"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is."*

First, Paul says for us to look carefully at how we walk. We do not want to walk like fools. Those who are wise walk like God. They emulate the life of Jesus. Jesus was the wisest man to live. How much care is needed for us to walk like him? That kind of life doesn't just happen. He devoted his life to it and became the greatest ever to live. This was his passion. We must care about what is wise like he cares about what is wise.

(James 1:5). *"If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you"*

Proverbs is an amazing book that confirms our need to be careful and wise. Solomon writes that the person who doesn't open their ears and cares about wisdom will never find it.

We all need to seek wisdom like we would seek great riches, but it is more valuable than great riches.

Proverbs 2:1--10 (ESV) says, "My child, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness, justice, and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul."

Proverbs 3:5--8 (ESV) reminds us to, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones."

Secondly, Paul says that the wise are "making the best use of their time." Paul says, "The days are evil." Maybe you don't feel that. These days seem pretty good to you. You get to do what you want to do. What does Paul mean when he says that? In their days, there was a push to worship the government and worship the almighty dollar. The world was full of a deceptive belief that they needed to enjoy the world and everything in it while they could. Does that sound familiar? The world pulls us to focus on the world. We are tempted every day to believe that we don't need to do anything for God. That is foolish. Be wise and serve God with your life. The investment will result in eternal joy and peace beyond comparison.

"Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is."

The third part of walking in wisdom tells us how to make the best use of our time. We need to understand the will of God. He talked about this back in verse 10, saying, "Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord." Our goal in life is to please him because of all that he has done for us. We need to know him and accept all that he has done for us. Then, we need to study to learn his will. It would be foolish to accept his blessings and live without trying to please him.

The wise use of time is spent carefully studying and obeying all that God says. We can understand God. His word is not too hard to understand. Those who want to know will know. Those who spend the time seeking will find. It is wise for those who receive God's blessings to seek and find God's will.

Ephesians 5:18 says *"And do not get drunk with wine, for that will ruin your life, but be filled with the Spirit."*

The fourth aspect of walking wisely says to be filled with the Spirit. What does that mean? Notice the contrast. He says, "Don't be drunk with wine." Instead of drinking our fill of wine and becoming drunk, he wants us to be filled with the Spirit. What does drinking alcohol have to do with all of this? Paul makes it clear that being drunk is a foolish use of our time. We know that don't we? Why do people get drunk? Drinking alcohol depresses the nervous system. That means it keeps us from feeling things and slows our reactions. Alcohol is the way many people don't deal with the reality they are facing. They medicate themselves.

Do we see the contrast with the filling of the Spirit? Those who are filled with the Spirit are seeking after the wisdom of God. Being filled with alcohol makes us foolish, but being filled with the Spirit makes us wise.

Proverbs 3:13, *“Happy is the one who finds wisdom.” Biblical wisdom is the path to deep and lasting joy and peace. Or consider Proverbs 24:13–14:*

*“My child, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.*

*Know that wisdom is such to your soul; In the same way, know that wisdom is good for you. Wisdom will give you something to hope for that will not disappoint you.”*

If you find true wisdom, it will lead you to a future that will last forever.

In 1 Kings in the Old Testament King Solomon is recorded as being given the opportunity to ask God for anything he desired. Instead of wealth or long life, he asked God for wisdom and discernment in ruling the people. Solomon realized the enormity of his position and the task before him; and so he asked God for wisdom, not personal gain.

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, ‘Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have NOT asked for — both wealth and honor — so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.’”

The Bible then records a story of two women who lived in the same home. They both became pregnant and gave birth within days of each other. During the night one of the mothers rolled on top of her child and it died. Realizing this she switched the dead child with the other mother’s live baby. In the morning, the other mother woke to find a dead child in her bed. But after close examination concluded that it was not her child.

The two women came before the king and began to argue about who the rightful mother of the living child was. They each claimed the child was theirs. In response the King ordered that a sword be brought to him. Then he ordered that the child be cut in two and half given to each woman. The real mother of the child was filled with compassion and asked for the child to be given to the other woman without being harmed, meanwhile the other was content that the child be killed and neither woman have him. This was sufficient for the king. He gave the baby to the first woman recognizing that

she was the true mother.

Life is hard, but it's easier when you have God's wisdom. The choice is yours this day, do you want God' wisdom or the World's wisdom?

Remember that knowledge and wisdom aren't the same. Knowledge refers to the accumulation of facts. Wisdom gives you understanding of what the facts mean. You could be the smartest person in the world and still be a fool. Anyone can gain knowledge, but only God can give you wisdom.

What does God's wisdom look like? How do we know it when we see it? James 3:17-18 gives us seven marks of God's wisdom:

*“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”*

If we hope to do anything useful in this world, we need God's wisdom. The good news is, if we ask for wisdom, God will not hold back. James 1:5 promises God will give wisdom to anyone who asks for it. We should pray like this as we ask God for wisdom so we can live wisely:

Lord, make me hungry for a pure heart.

Lord, help me be a peacemaker, not a peace-breaker.

Lord, give me grace to reply gently when I feel like blowing my top.

Lord, deliver me from feeling like I always need to defend myself.

Lord, open my eyes to see the hurting people who need my help.

Lord, set me free from partiality and favoritism.

Lord, make me a person whose life is an open book.

Lord, use me to plant seeds that will reap a great harvest for you.

May the Lord give us heavenly wisdom because we can't live without it!