

*In the name of God, who makes us, loves us, and keeps us. Amen*

Don't you just wish that everyone would think of you as the wisest person in the room?! You know, the one person to whom everyone turns for advice and insight; the person who always knows how to choose the best path, the best route to peace and happiness? That wise person who sees the big picture, who has his act together, that guru sitting at the summit of life's craggy peak, that enlightened one who has overcome ignorance and worry, that one who is the envy of all of us who blindly stumble through our lives of care and woe. Don't you just wish your children might see you that way?! I know I long to be remembered as less of a "wise guy" and more of a wise person.

In Christian teaching, wisdom is often identified as 'The Holy Spirit'. God's own Spirit and life force, Wisdom as the mind of God, shared with us in and through the form and person of Christ Jesus. The presence of Christ, we say, gives us the miraculous benefit of experiencing God's own wisdom. And remember, we are still in the season of Pentecost, both by the calendar of the church year and by the reckoning of our stage of life. We are in those days when the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of Christ's own true promise, has alighted on us and abides with us, to teach us and to lead us into all truth, that we may be a royal priesthood and preach the Gospel to all nations. This wisdom we carry somewhere within us, thanks to God's great gift. The light of truth, and the dove of peace, believe it or not, dwells within us, planted there in creation by God our parent and activated by the love of Christ. Jesus comes to us who would be disciples and says 'my peace I give to you' and then we feel his own breath fill our lungs with life and spirit.

If that's true, if God's Spirit of wisdom dwells deep within us, then becoming a wise person is not so much a matter of what we attain, but of what we discover. Something we discover in ourselves when the breath of Christ's love activates our lives. We can't just Google our way to wisdom, or follow the step-by-step directions in some owner's manual...even if that manual is masquerading as the Holy Bible itself. It's not the information in the Bible which saves us, it's the spirit in the Bible which can make our lives meaningful and faithful. It's the spirit of wisdom we can discover in the message of its pages that makes the Bible so Holy. Our journey of discovery, then, is (at least in part, I think) an inward journey. Think of it as an 'unfolding'. The mysteries of our lives, of our heritage as God's beloved children, of our destiny in the kingdom of God's dreams for us, unfolding before our eyes, revealing God's own Spirit working and living among us.

When King David has died, his son Solomon takes up the responsibility of leading the Judean people, hoping to have God in his corner. As he is beginning his reign as the new king, Solomon has a dream, in which God says 'what can I do for you? Ask what I should give you!' I fear we sometimes forget that God daily asks the same of us, challenging us to consider what it is we truly would like. In Solomon's case, it is an understanding mind, one which can readily discern good from evil. That's what he believes he wants and needs. We shouldn't confuse God with a genie from the lamp, but when God asks Solomon what his first and foremost wish is, it turns out to be wisdom. And God is delighted to grant that wish, unfolding a destiny of wise leadership and faithfulness, one even more fruitful than that of old king David. The 'Wisdom of Solomon'

remains legendary even to this day. He knew the importance of a discerning mind, and knew enough to go to the source to request it.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, says Psalm 111, which in more modern translation would probably read 'honoring the Lord' or 'knowing the Lord'. But that's where wisdom begins. God is the source, and wisdom is God's to distribute, to give as we have the nerve to ask for it. The Psalmist suggests that it is the most important of prayer requests, the first wish we should make, ahead even of riches, good health, and world peace. Those who are awe-struck and honor the Lord, and who act accordingly, praising God's good will and Spirit, will have a good understanding. Those who open their hearts to receive and share God's Spirit will begin to discern the way and the truth and the life which invites them to be royalty. Something like the example of Solomon. "Be careful how you live", Paul writes to the faith community at Ephesus, live "not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of time". Time is short, and our days are numbered, but as our destiny unfolds, so does God's Spirit among us. The Spirit unfolds her wings, inviting us to soar with her.

Several of you have asked if I had a relaxing vacation, which reveals that you have something yet to learn about my dear wife. Gale's ambitious vision of 'time away' is less about relaxing on some beach, but rather of using every possible moment of available time to learn new things and discover new relationships. So, let's go visit someone we haven't seen in ages, it's only 500 miles out of our way, and if we don't arrive home until 3 in the morning, who cares? Gale's wisdom isn't so much about being efficient or beating the clock, but of permitting God's opportunities to unfold, of soaring with the Spirit, of using what little time we have to explore and appreciate. That's her vision of using time wisely, and I must say it's a contagious vision. My daughter-in-law Virginia, Jason's wife, who is a medical doctor and knows something about physical conditions, says that the "Smith men" have an inertia problem, that we tend to follow the law of physics which says that a body at rest wants to remain that way. But even I have been lured by Gale's enthusiasm, and often rally myself for the opportunity of exploration and discovery. It just seems like a very wise way to spend, or invest, the time. And as I unpack the souvenirs of our recent trip, they are, aside from a few new license plates, restored and renewed relationships, and thoughts of enlightening new experiences.

Yes, we are waist-deep in the season of Pentecost which extends until December and the Advent season. Pentecost is a season during which we honor and explore the gift of the Holy Spirit, a blessing given by God and enabled by Christ. During this season, we find ourselves reminded to fill our lungs with the breath of God and our hearts with spiritual discernment. Like Solomon, we hear God asking 'What can I do for you today', and we are coaxed by Jesus and Holy Scripture to reply that we wish, above all else, for understanding hearts, for wisdom which in fact surpasses all conventional understanding, that we may live life to the fullest and the best. The wisdom of God's Holy Spirit defies definition. I wish I could, but I can't really tell you just what wisdom is. We all need to discover that for ourselves. But I can encourage you to seek it as your lives unfold, to practice faithfulness, to be guided by Christ. And I truly believe that I can reassure you that God's Holy Spirit, and the wisdom she keeps us with, resides in you, waiting to be revealed through love, waiting to be unfolded and used, that you may truly live. Amen