

January 4, 2009
 Messiah
 Christmas 2 – B

Luke 2:40-52
 I Should have asked for Wisdom for Christmas

Introduction

1. I'm going to give you quote – see if you can figure out who wrote this? And When?
2. “Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise; they no longer rise when elders enter the room; they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers.”
3. Would you believe this is quote from Socrates – some 400 years before Christ?
4. Socrates is describing a problem in his day – and the problem is a lack of WISDOM from the youth
5. WISDOM – to Socrates, a non-Christian, would have meant to “apply knowledge to matters of life”
6. But for Christians – WISDOM means EVEN MORE!
 - a. When used in the Bible, WISDOM means to apply the knowledge of GOD’S WORD to matters of life
 - b. Wisdom is the ability and the art to connect faith and life; Christ and life; Salvation in Jesus Christ and life

I. Look at our Old Testament Reading today – one we have learned from our Sunday School days as children

- A. It is the story of Solomon
 - i. Solomon has now become king – following his father, King David
 - ii. Would you believe Solomon is about 20 YEARS OLD at the time of this story
 - iii. Think of the 20 year-olds we know: Gage Fuchs and Rebekah Baneck will be 20 in this next year → think of them being a king or a queen → ruling a whole nation of people
- B. Solomon was young – he had not yet fully grown into the ability of applying His knowledge of God with matters of life
 - i. As a matter of fact – Solomon was in the habit of worshipping at the high places
 - ii. He went to altars and worship areas where the people worshipped false gods: Baal and Asherah
 - iii. These were fertility gods – where the worshipper was involved with temple prostitutes – and this was not wise, but foolish!
- C. But Solomon realized his sins, and he realized his short-comings; Solomon realized his lack of wisdom, his inability to apply the knowledge of God to matters of life

- i. And so Solomon prayed for wisdom
- ii. He prayed for the ability to apply God's Word to matters of life in ruling God's people, Israel
- iii. And Solomon was granted his prayer – God gave him wisdom as no one else has ever had
- iv. It may not have been Christmas – but God nevertheless “gifted” Solomon with WISDOM

II. **We jump ahead about 950 years later – to a boy only 12 years old**

- A. Think of the children we know who are 12
 - i. Later this new year – Kaylin (granddaughter of John and Jan), and Esther (daughter of Steffan and Lisa) will both be 12
 - ii. Now, while these young girls may be smart and intelligent, we probably would not say they are WISE
 - iii. Really, no 12 year old is WISE; no 12 year old has developed the art and practice applying God's Word with matters of life
 - iv. That's why 12-year olds need parents, and grandparents, and teachers, and pastors – to teach them wisdom...
 - v. To instill in them the knowledge of God's Word – and to help them develop the skill and maturity of applying God's Word to matters of life
- B. There has actually been done a lot of study lately on the adolescent brain
 - i. It used to be thought that the “blossoming and pruning” process in the brain was completed in early childhood...
 - ii. But recent technology and studies show the brain actually is not yet fully developed until well into the early 20's
 - iii. This process of “blossoming” is the overproduction of brain cells branches in the brain – and this process peaks in the prefrontal cortex of the brain around the age 12
 - iv. At the same time, teen brains are furiously producing “dendrites” in the prefrontal cortex
 - v. At the same time – there is this “pruning process” taking place – where neuron branches that are not used wither up and die
 - vi. Because of this – teenagers have a difficult time controlling their impulses, when they get frustrated or upset they have a more difficult time keeping their thoughts to themselves, they don't think about consequences of their actions
 - vii. Now, while this is not an excuse to SIN, it does show why a teenager displays a lack of “WISDOM” – the ability to apply God's Word with matters of life
 - viii. This is why, in the church, we teach, train, and educate our children God's Word – that they may grow in WISDOM
 - 1. We have set up Lutheran Schools across the nation
 - 2. We have our children go to Sunday School

3. We have them memorize and learn God's Word
4. We have them go to Catechesis and learn of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, Baptism, Confession and Absolution, and Holy Communion
5. It is to train their minds, their will, their hearts, their souls – to be able to apply the knowledge of God's Word with matters of life

C. Have you noticed – the things we struggle with in teaching our children – when they grow up, these are the same things with which they in turn, struggle with their children

- i. Their choice of movies, video games, and music
- ii. Their ability to be polite, respect their elders, and appreciate education
- iii. Their control of the tongue, talking back, and controlling their anger
- iv. Their control of sexual urges, and growing in their ability to think of the thoughts and feelings of others rather than only themselves!

D. But science or no science – if the truth be known – we all lack WISDOM every day

- i. We all have difficulty applying the knowledge of God's Word with matters of life
- ii. The language that comes across our lips, the sinful urges we act upon, the times we pout or misuse our authority, the times we overspend or become greedy, the times we desire to enjoy the things of the world in place of God and His Church
- iii. This is SIN – not disciplining our lives with God's Word – a TOTAL lack of WISDOM
- iv. We are not our own masters; we live under the rule and reign of Almighty God, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior

III. **Let's return to that 12-year boy in the Temple, Jesus Christ!**

A. Twice in our Gospel reading, surrounding this incident in the Temple, St. Luke says, "He was filled with WISDOM, He increased in wisdom, he grew in favor with God and man"

- i. Jesus was a 12-year old boy at one time - He too had to pass through childhood into adolescence
- ii. But while Jesus was 100% human, He was also 100% GOD
- iii. Jesus is WISDOM from all eternity, Jesus is WISDOM in the flesh, Jesus is WISDOM of the Holy Trinity who becomes human flesh and blood
- iv. Beyond any other 12-year old, Jesus is wiser than them all
- v. Look at His desire – to be in the Temple – to be in His Father's House

- vi. Jesus was not a 12-year freak, Jesus is what every 12-year is to be; Jesus is not a 12-year human nerd, Jesus is what every human being is suppose to be

B. But Christianity is not about simply trying to model our lives to LIVE LIKE JESUS

- i. Christianity is not about growing in wisdom through the years to become better and better Christians
- ii. Christianity is about our total lack of ability to be human as God has created us to be
 - 1. This whole frontal brain cortex thing – is a consequence of the fall – that destroyed and ruined everything – stripping us of all wisdom, holiness, and discernment
 - 2. This whole lack of wisdom in us all, this total inability to apply God’s Word to our lives – is proof that we are victims and participants in the fall!

C. This Gospel Reading today is not about 12-year olds looking at Jesus and working their way up to be like Him

- i. This Gospel Reading today is Jesus, Wisdom in the flesh, who comes to be the Savior of us foolish, unwise, and sinful human beings
- ii. At 12 years old, Jesus comes and desires to be in the Temple
- iii. One main thing happened at the Temple – the sacrifice of animals
 - 1. From Old Testament times, from God’s instructions in the Book of Leviticus – these animal sacrifices longed for the time when ONE PERFECT SACRIFICE would come and be the substitute for all man’s sins
 - 2. Every lamb, goat, calf, and bull sacrificed at the temple was a foreshadow of the great bloody sacrifice to cover all mankind’s sins!
 - 3. Jesus is DIVINE WISDOM, WISDOM IN THE FLESH who already now comes to the Temple, who will one day be the sacrifice for the sins of the world!
 - 4. He is wisdom who will die for the foolish; He is holy who will die for the sinful; He is Life Eternal who will die for the damned
- iv. In holy, perfect wisdom → Jesus must be about His Father’s business in the Temple → even as we hear the echoes of John 3:16 in our ears, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life!”
- v. Do you know why we are saved? Do you know why we are forgiven? Do you know why we will go to heaven?

1. Because WISDOM came to the temple – already at age 12!
2. Both Rebekah and Joshua has their “WISDOM TEETH” surgically removed this past Tuesday – but it was not “WISDOM TEETH” that saved us, but it was Wisdom in the Flesh who came to give His entire life for us
3. Have we seen snow like this in the last number of years – but may all this snow, may all this MUCH snow, may the inches and feet of snow remind us of Psalm 51, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow”
4. This 12-year old Wisdom God has come to make us cleaner and whiter than the new fallen purest snow, washing us in the water of Holy Baptism

IV. Knowing Divine Wisdom came to earth - changes our desires for this life

- A. In my flesh – I have many earthly desires... perhaps like you
 - i. I desire good food, a nice house, I'd love to take trips around the world, have nice cars, wear new clothes...
 - ii. But as one grows in years, and hopefully in wisdom – wisdom tells you that these are not the most important things in life
 - iii. Even as we grow even older and older – and get closer to death – we come to understand the things of this world do not save us...
 - iv. Death can come at any time – not just in the elderly years: from a car accident, from a childhood disease, from war...
 - v. And eventually we begin to realize the greatest thing we could ask for at Christmas time, or any time, is WISDOM...
 - vi. For God to teach us His Word, to instill in us what it means that He has come to save us, and to understand what being saved means to our relationships and how we deal with fellow human beings

- B. Many people make New Year's Resolutions...
 - i. Lose weight, be nicer, get out of debt...
 - ii. But to grow in wisdom, that's the best New Year's Resolution we could all make - to be in God's Word
 - iii. As we grow in God's Word, we grow in Wisdom, we grow in the “better things” of this life, we grow in knowing who we are as the children of the True, and Only, and Eternal God
 - iv. We grow in discerning good from evil
 - v. We grow in order to live according to God's Commands, absorbed in God's love

Conclusion

1. Wisdom – is the ability to apply the knowledge of God’s Word to matters of life
2. When Mary gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem, she treasured all these things in her heart
3. When Mary found Jesus in the temple at 12 years old, again, St. Luke tells us again - “His mother Mary treasured up all these things in her heart”
4. At Christmas – we got Wisdom, we got Jesus Christ, our Savior born in Bethlehem
5. As we ponder Christ’s birth, as we think about His death and resurrection, as we continue in His Word → we too ponder all these things in our heart
6. And God turns this pondering in our heart into wisdom → the ability to apply the knowledge of God’s Word to matters of life
7. We got wisdom for Christmas – NO GIFT could be better – and we will cherish this gift all the way into heaven. Amen.