

## Walking Wisely

*By Linda Rex*

**August 18, 2024, Proper 15 | After Pentecost**—Often, it is as we deal with the consequences of our choices that we begin to grow in wisdom, and learn the significant life lessons we need to learn as we grow up in Christ. One of the interesting characters from biblical history is King Solomon. In our Old Testament reading for this Sunday, we see how King Solomon is invited by God to ask for anything he wants. King Solomon chooses, instead of wealth, fame, or power, to ask God for wisdom in order to properly judge his people. In response, God promises King Solomon wisdom. But since that's all he asked for, the Lord also promises him many of the things he did not ask for (1 Kings 2:10–12, 3:3–14).

God kept his word to King Solomon. He became well known for his wisdom and also became powerful, famous, and rich. We find, though, that throughout his life, Solomon failed to pay close attention to the one thing which would have given him true wisdom—walking in God's way, the same way his father David had walked. And because he missed the mark in this, Solomon ended his life far afield from the humble dependence upon God with which he had started. Upon his death, his kingdom was divided and all he worked for came to naught.

In our New Testament reading for this Sunday, Ephesians 5:15-20, the apostle Paul admonishes the members in Ephesia to be careful how they walk. They are to walk wisely, not unwisely, realizing the evil times they find themselves living in. In order to walk wisely, they need to understand the will of God. Paul encourages them to be filled with the Spirit and to give thanks, no matter what they face, in the name of Jesus to our heavenly Father. In understanding the will of God, they are to live each day filled with the Spirit and with praise and gratitude in their hearts and on their lips. As we read Paul's message, we discover that God's wisdom looks a lot different than what we might immediately expect.

While it is good to have wisdom in dealing with the everyday issues of life, like King Solomon needed wisdom to deal with the everyday issues of reigning over Israel, the greater wisdom has to do with our relationship with our Father through Jesus in the Spirit. In our New Testament passage for this Sunday, Jesus tells his listeners that in order to have true life, they need to eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6:51–58). Keeping in mind that the religious teaching of these people said that eating human flesh and drinking human blood was a sacrilegious practice, we can understand why Jesus' listeners struggled with what he was saying. Wisdom, according to human understanding, said they were to avoid eating and drinking of Jesus. But true, divine wisdom said they were to partake of Christ in an ongoing way, if they wanted true life. Which was the truth?

We are reminded that Jesus said that he is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6) He taught us that the Spirit of truth would lead us into all truth (Jn. 16:13). And that truth would set us free (Jn. 8:32). Where do we turn when we are uncertain as to how to walk wisely? We turn to Jesus Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24). Jesus Christ, the Son of God in human flesh, who lived our life, died our death, and rose again, is the embodiment of true wisdom. He gives us himself in the Spirit so that we can, by the Spirit, participate in his perfect and complete wisdom.

When we struggle with choices, decisions, relationships, and so many other troubles, we find our rest in the One who has gone before us and who holds within himself the truth of our human experience and existence, glorified in the presence of our heavenly Father in the Spirit. This is why the apostle Paul tells us to “be filled with the Spirit.” This is a continuous event—we keep on being filled anew with God's Spirit, the indwelling presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Father. As we open ourselves up to the heavenly Spirit of God, we participate in the wisdom of

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God, and find ourselves participating in Christ's own life in relationship with his Father, and expressing our gratitude and praise in response. This is the life of faith, life in the Spirit, which we were designed and redeemed to live in, now and on into the new heaven and earth. What a gift God has given us! In Christ, we have been given true wisdom, as we continually open ourselves up to and receive his Spirit. As we live and walk in the Spirit rather than according to our human wisdom, we experience real life, life in the Spirit—and this is what we were created for.

*Dear heavenly Father, we recognize that our human wisdom falls far short of what we need in order to truly live as you desire. Grant us the grace to turn to Jesus for the wisdom you offer. We open ourselves up anew to your Spirit, that we may be filled anew, in Jesus' name, with your perfect wisdom. Amen.*

*"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;"* Ephesians 5:15–20 NASB

*" 'I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.' Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.' "* John 6:51–58 NASB

*"In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, 'Ask what you wish me to give you.' Then Solomon said, 'You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David my father; according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You; and You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?' It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. God said to him, 'Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor; so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.' "* 1 Kings (2:10–12), 3:(3–4), 5–14 NASB