

## New Hope Sermon Jesus' Wisdom Personified

Last week we unpacked the text *In Christ are hidden all the wisdom and knowledge of God*. We talked about it from an academic perspective since Christ has all the wisdom we will ever need in our studies and research. We mentioned some personal implications, such as speaking wise words that build up others, learning to live satisfied in God's timing, learning to live with JOY, learning to hold fast to God when the world scorns our choices...

But to continue with our practical applications, today I want to see how Christ personified God's wisdom in his daily life and encounters. He always gets it right, even when our unconscious doesn't.

One of the women who graduated from Wheaton with her TESOL degree two years ago shares this story called "Language Dreams." She leaves Aug. 16 for the Middle East as a missionary.

"I've been working on a Second Language Acquisition (SLA) course these last 3 weeks in preparation for entering full-time language study in my new country. After the first day of class, I had a dream that I encountered an elderly Arabic-speaking woman who looked lost. I offered to help her, but as I tried to give her directions, I realized I was speaking in Spanish and not Arabic! Unfortunately, I think this dream may be a foreshadowing of my early experiences as an Arabic student! ☺ It's funny how our brains can kick into "second-language mode" but then try to access the wrong language." 8/2/18 E. Marsch's update.

Christ gets it right. As we look at the stories of Jesus in the Gospel, I found three areas where Jesus applied wisdom. First, He made God the complete center of His life. Second, He shows us how to love others by working for people's healing. Third, He was wise in defeating evil. Two of them we will talk about today. The first two fulfilled the command to *love God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and the second to love your neighbor as yourself*. How did He do it?

### First, Jesus Total dependence on God

Before Jesus chose His twelve disciples, we read in Luke 6:12-13 that He spent the night in prayer. Then in John 5, he says that He does nothing without the Father's direction and empowerment.:<sup>19</sup> *Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. <sup>30</sup> By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."* (John 5: 19-20;30).

That is a model of absolute dependence on God and is the source of all power and grace and goodness that we will demonstrate in our own lives. Jesus reiterated that thought in John 15:4 *"I Am the vine, you are the branches, without me you can do nothing."* A wise disciple lives under that priority. And that same love that Jesus and the Father shared is what He says we can share as well.

### Second, His great wisdom in all his dealings with people.

This is where we get stuck or off track, right? We speak too quickly, we judge too easily, we harbor wounded feelings, we are like the religious people in the parable of the Good Samaritan who saw the man wounded on the side of the road and were too busy, or too afraid, or too preoccupied in the next thing they were hurrying to, that they didn't stop and help and help him. We do not love our neighbor as ourselves. But consider with me how different Jesus' model is – He was always working to help people become whole.

"Jesus fleshed out the gospel. He put clothes on grace...He adapted his teaching to the needs of each one. To one who valued wealth, he promised treasure in heaven. To the person thirsting for

satisfaction, he extended living water. To the fishermen, he promised the greatest catch of their lives. To the doubting, he gave physical proof. Jesus didn't preach the truth, he placed it on the heart. And each heart is different. He listened to the skeptic and discerned their deepest longing, longings he put there, and insisted they find fulfillment, in him. Jonathan Dodson, "Preaching to Skeptics this Easter," Preaching today.com 2/19/18

He was always working to help people become whole. How did he do it? We start with the story when He came upon a man by the pool of Siloam who was obviously saturated with self-pity.

### **1. He asked wise questions that speak to the heart**

*5 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda[a] and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. [4] [b] 5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" 7 "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." 8 Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." 9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, (John 5:1-9)*

Jesus' question to the man "do you want to get well?" penetrated to the emotional depth of the man's woundedness and self-pity. And despite the man's answers, which displayed his sense of helplessness and self-pity, Jesus still chose to heal him. I wonder if Jesus' question to the man caused him to look at his own heart. If that is true, then his healing could have been more than physical, it would dealt with the emotional shackles that wound around his heart.

Then let's look at Jesus' interaction with blind Bartimaeus:

*46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. 51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." 52 "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. (Mark 10: 46-52).*

When Bartimaeus kept shouting "Jesus Son of David, have mercy on me!," many people rebuked him (v48) and told him to be quiet. But Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." After Bartimaeus came to Jesus, Jesus asked a similar question that He asked the man at the pool: "What do you want Me to do for you?" Bartimaeus said, "Lord, I want to see." "Go," Jesus said, "Your faith has healed you."

If we have the wisdom Jesus showed Bartimaeus and the cripple of Shalom, we will follow the Holy Spirit's leading to go to the depth of the emotion and need inside of the person - whether helping them to examine their own wounded emotions or helping them articulate what is the great desire of their heart. We don't just give them a surface answer or solution to their problem, we become instruments of God for their total healing like Jesus was.

### **2. He challenged those He healed to be His witness**

Next, Jesus' interaction with the demoniac, at Gadara, Mark 5:1-20. After Jesus healed this many who had been plagued by a whole host of demons, Verse 18 he begged to go with Him. Jesus did not let him. *18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the*

*Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”<sup>20</sup> So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed (Mark 5:18-20).*

Notice Jesus gave the man a new purpose in his healing. The healing wasn't just for himself. He was to be a witness. *“Go back home. And tell them how much the Lord has done for you.”* It says in verse 20 he began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. He didn't just tell his family. He went to the ten cities in the area to witness to Christ.

That's how the gospel spreads. And part of our wisdom, like Jesus, is to encourage people to become His witnesses. Not just to stay in the comfort of their family but to go and make disciples of others (Matt. 28:18).

### **3. He monitored the disciples' soul care**

Wisdom in all our relationships with people includes helping them with their soul care. In Mark 6: 30-31: *“<sup>30</sup> The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.”* There was a continual press of people. *“<sup>31</sup> Then Mark adds, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat,”* So often we're busy about that, aren't we? People are coming and going, we are coming and going, and that is certainly true in this house right now, and it can create a harried spirit. We need the words of Jesus *“he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.””* And we need to take the time for soul rest before and after we are spent helping others. Jesus went with the disciples for that soul rest, and perhaps we will need to do that too. This is the wisdom in helping people find balance in their lives.

There were other factors that showed the need for that rest as well. In the context of this story, John the Baptist had just been killed by Herod, so there was deep grieving. Such grieving always creates an emotional drain, so the recovery time was essential.

### **4. He taught Balance**

But in this story we discover that people saw them go away, a large crowd of 5000plus people. And Jesus reacted to that crowd out of *compassion. He saw they were sheep without a shepherd.* When the disciples came and told him to send the people away because it is a remote place and getting dark, He said to them, *“You give them something to eat”* (v. 37). Amazing. Jesus in His wisdom knew how to balance soul rest with =the needs of ministry. So He wanted them to do that too - help them balance their soul rest and restoration with the needs of people. In that context He provided the miracle for their feeding (v.41). Taking the five loaves and the two fish, the disciples brought to him, He gave thanks, and the disciples distributed the food to everyone so they were completely satisfied – with food left over to feed the disciples for another meal!

I think we need that wisdom, in how we balance our own lives of nurture and ministry. We don't always know how to deal with the demands on our lives. But we ask for Jesus' wisdom to help us know what are our priorities from God's perspective. Yesterday Keith and I were having some soul care time together. We were watching a movie in my office when Sam and his family from Canada, and Given coming in from Indonesia both arrived at our house at once. Sam was coming back for the year and Given is here for a week before he moves back to campus. Naturally, I got up from the movie to greet them all, and catch up with them. And we talked for a few minutes. But I had left Keith alone in my office and I felt torn between the soul care for he and I, and these returning house and church members. It was the classic issue of balancing soul care with ministry. The choice I felt the Spirit said I should make was to go back and join Keith to be with him. Our literal times together are very precious to him now in Alzheimer's. So I apologized to everyone standing in the hallway and explained that I wanted to go back to be with Keith. And they were all fine with that. This is part of

what we do for one another, beloved, we give each other permission to have soul care even when ministry opportunities are right in front of us.

In the feeding of the 5000 story, we learn that Jesus can also multiply our resources when we feel drained and have nothing to give. It was his miracle that fed the huge crowd. It will be his miracle that helps us feed the needy people around us.

### **5. He Exhorted and rebuked**

Finally, Jesus' wisdom in dealing with the disciples included exhortation and admonition. He did not minimize the cost of discipleship. He did not water down the expectations of God for them. He did not allow the disciples to live self-satisfied contented lives on their own term. Instead, He turned to them and said, <sup>26</sup> *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26-27.*

In our discipling of others, we need to heed Jesus's wisdom, and not set the bar of discipleship too low. When we do that, we created a me-centered Christianity. Jesus set the bar where God wanted it and knew that the Holy Spirit that would come to them will help them live in that level. We need to do the same.

In the same way, Jesus rebuked the disciples when they had an evident lack of faith. I think of two stories. One is the time when the disciples were unable to cast a demon out of a boy who had seizures (Matt 17). Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of the boy, but when the disciples asked *why couldn't we drive them out?* he said directly, *"because you have so little faith."* He didn't say "I know it was a scary situation to see that boy with a seizure falling into fire. But God is able and your lack of faith prevented his healing." Then, after the rebuke, he gave that amazing promise, <sup>20</sup> *Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*(v.20-21).

In Luke 24 we read of the time Jesus met his disciples after his resurrection on the road to Emmaus. <sup>17</sup> *He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup> One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" <sup>19</sup> "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup> but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. <sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."*

### **6. He provided Perspective**

<sup>25</sup> *He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. Luke 24:17-27).*

Again in His wisdom, He asked a question to the disciples to get them to articulate what was on their heart. He didn't just come and stand before them and say "Hi, here I am. I'm risen from the dead." He let them tell him their version of their lives as they saw it. That's the power of listening that allows us to be beside another in their bewilderment and confusion. The Emmaus disciples revealed to Him their hopes that Jesus had been the Messiah and yet He had been crucified. Then they told him about

the “rumour” that the tomb was empty, and they couldn’t understand it. But Jesus responds to their story (v25) *how foolish you are and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken*. He actually rebuked their faith when they were grieving, and bewildered, and confused. He wanted them to see the big picture which they were missing.

We need His wisdom as we work with people who are grieving, bewildered, and confused. We need to help them see the big picture: “Did not God say...” Verse 27 in our text says: “*beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*” He explained to them the big picture. He opened their eyes to see God’s purposes for the Messiah. In wisdom, how can we help people move their thinking from their self-absorption and confusion to God’s purpose.

**Summary:**

Jesus is wisdom incarnate. When we tap into that wisdom, we can help others know the issues in their own heart, we can challenge them to be witnesses, can help them get soul care, help them find balance in their life, help them deal with their own lack of faith and restore God’s perspective for them. All this is practical wisdom if we ask. But it started with Jesus, notice, with His total dependence on the Father. “The Son can do nothing of His own accord. And neither can we. If we do not abide in him, what we try to do and say will be worthless. Only Jesus brings the true fruit that glorifies God in our lives. He is the vine; we are the branches, so In Him, we can bear much fruit. In him we too can be healers of people for God’s sake. Amen.

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