

Sermon Series: “Celebrating Life: Catching the Joy Steelers”–Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 6/28/09
Title: “Celebrating Learning–Catching Narrow-Mindedness”
Text: Ecclesiastes 9:13-18
Intro.: *Illus.: Did You Know? and “Ignorant Knowledge”*
Theme: Learning, knowledge, and wisdom are gifts from God and find their proper place in our lives when we allow Christ’s Spirit to lead us in the use of them in our lives and the respect of it in others.

God’s words and warnings about knowledge and wisdom

- Knowledge does not necessarily make you wise
- 1. Knowledge can be a dangerous thing
 - a. **Illus.: Pretending Knowledge**
 - b. Personally – *For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief. Ecclesiastes 1:18*
 - c. To Others – *Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 1 Corinthians 8:1*
- 2. Knowledge can be a blessing to many around us and should be celebrated as God’s presence in another
 - a. **The example of Daniel and his friends** *To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. Daniel 1:17*
 - b. Spiritual gift of knowledge (*1 Corinthians 12*) – used by God in framing his work and plan to others through you/me
 - c. The application of his love and care through the use in the medical/industrial/creative “arts” in work place
- Knowledge and wisdom do not give you “*the right to . . .*”
- 1. **1 Corinthians 8:9-12**
- 2. Too often we condescend with, manipulate by, and abuse through our “God-given” knowledge
 - a. In our work and social associations when we accentuate pecking orders
 - b. In our parental and family relationships where we use it to put down with sarcasm
 - c. *For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? 1 Corinthians 4:7*
- 3. Wisdom happens when we learn to restrain our knowledge and reign it in for God’s glory and others benefit
 - a. *“Everything is permissible”--but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible”--but not everything is constructive . . .whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:23, 31*
 - b. **Illus.: Ugly women and hockey teams**
 - c. *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. James 3:17-18*
- Knowledge and wisdom have been redeemed by Christ – the wisdom of God
- 1. **1 Corinthians 1:18-24**
- 2. It begins with understanding that because of sin even God’s gifts of wisdom and knowledge are twisted within
- 3. Humbling looking for how God has and can redeem your life for an wise purpose
 - a. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9:10*
 - b. Training ourselves and children to seek out God’s wisdom for talents, careers, marriages, futures
- 4. Boasting in God’s wisdom through Christ before we ever give self-praise to an accomplishment/achievement
- 5. Learning that the highest form of knowledge and wisdom is learning to give grace like God gives it to you
 - a. *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children Ephesians 4:32-5:1*

Biblical Principles for Celebrating knowledge and wisdom in a Godly Way

- God uses the simple and the plain to display his majestic wisdom (**Ecclesiastes 9:13-16**)
- 1. Solomon observed truth, perhaps in his own life experience as king, about the unappreciated strength of wisdom
 - a. “Wisdom is better than strength.” (**Vs. 16**)
- 2. To our loss we disdain and dismiss the value of submissive and deferring wisdom through which God delivers
 - a. *“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Luke 6:20*
- Few, quiet words win the day, every day, over brash and blustery responses (**Ecclesiastes 9:17-18**)
- 1. Unfortunately careless conduct and words can undo years of building through wisdom – tend the fires of your life
- 2. That takes first of all submitting everything to the King—including my wisdom, knowledge, and opinion
- 3. *We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:5*

Did You Know – 2008 – video clip

Ignorant Knowledge

Two pals are sitting in a pub watching the eleven-o'clock news. A report comes on about a man threatening to jump from the 20th floor of a downtown building. One friend turns to the other and says, "I'll bet you ten bucks the guy doesn't jump." "It's a bet," agrees his buddy. A few minutes later, the man on the ledge jumps. So the loser hands his pal a \$10 bill. "I can't take your money," his friend admits. "I saw him jump earlier on the six-o'clock news." "Me, too," say the other buddy. "But I didn't think he'd do it again!" *Reader's Digest, June, 1994, p. 72.*

Pretending Knowledge

Once a preacher of little schooling tried to impress a guest speaker whom he was introducing to his congregation: "The man we has speaking to us is a man who knows the unknowable, can solve the unsolvable and can screw the inscrutable." **S.L. Johnson.**

Ugly Women and Hockey Teams

A man working in the produce department was asked by a lady if she could buy half a head of lettuce. He replied, "Half a head? Are you serious? God grows these in whole heads and that's how we sell them!" "You mean," she persisted, "that after all the years I've shopped here, you won't sell me half-a-head of lettuce?" "Look," he said, "If you like I'll ask the manager." She indicated that would be appreciated, so the young man marched to the front of the store. "You won't believe this, but there's a lame-braided idiot of a lady back there who wants to know if she can buy half-a-head of lettuce." He noticed the manager gesturing, and turned around to see the lady standing behind him, obviously having followed him to the front of the store. "And this nice lady was wondering if she could buy the other half" he concluded. Later in the day the manager cornered the young man and said, "That was the finest example of thinking on your feet I've ever seen! Where did you learn that?" "I grew up in Grand Rapids, and if you know anything about Grand Rapids, you know that it's known for its great hockey teams and its ugly women." The manager's face flushed, and he interrupted, "My wife is from Grand Rapids!" "And which hockey team did she play for?"

1 Corinthians 8:9-12

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? ¹¹So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. ¹²When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:18-24

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." ²⁰Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²²Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

¹³I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: ¹⁴There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it. ¹⁵Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. ¹⁶So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

¹⁷The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.

¹⁸Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good. [NIV]