

Jesus: The Wisdom of God

Proverbs 13:20 says,

*²⁰ One who walks with wise people will be wise,
But a companion of fools will suffer harm.*

With whom are you walking? Seriously, who are the people that influence you – how you think and act? If they are fools, you will suffer harm. But on the other hand if you will walk with wise people, you will become wise. You will become skillful in knowing how to live life well; how to discern what is true, what is right, and what should be done in different situations according to God's will. And so, with whom are you walking?

In one of our first sermons in this series, Steve asked us a very simple, but important question. He asked us, "Do you want to become wise?" If your answer to that was and is, "yes," then you simply must walk with wise people. If you want to become wise, you must walk with Jesus. He is wisdom from God!

Today, we are wrapping up our sermon series, *Becoming Wise: A Matter of Life and Death*. We hope that this has spurred you on to seek wisdom in your life as we've looked at some of the wisdom literature in the Bible (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the book of Job), and as we've looked at examples of wisdom in the lives of Daniel, Joseph, and Solomon. These books and these examples are given for our instruction to make us wise. Today, we are going to consider Jesus. Any attempt to understand wisdom and how we become wise, would be woefully incomplete without considering Jesus. And so that's what we are going to do today.

My hope is that each of us who are true seekers of wisdom will leave here today with a renewed commitment to seek Jesus and to walk with him. We are going to look at some passages in the Gospels as well as the Epistles that demonstrate that he is wise and the ultimate source of wisdom. And so, let's start by looking at the Gospels.

I. Jesus' Wisdom – The Gospels

I want to look at a passage from when Jesus was a child and then a couple from his teaching ministry. And so, let's look first at Luke 2:40-52 where we see Jesus' wisdom as a child.

A. Jesus' Wisdom as a Child (Luke 2:40-52)

Obviously, we don't have a lot of information about Jesus between the birth narratives and when he started his public ministry. Matthew records how Mary and Joseph fled with Jesus to Egypt to escape the murderous rage of Herod when Jesus was an infant, but other than that, there is only one other passage from Jesus' childhood, and it is a passage that highlights Jesus' wisdom.

In Luke 2, we twice read about Jesus' growing in wisdom. In the first part of chapter 2 of Luke, Luke writes about how Jesus' parents in accordance with the law presented him to the Lord in Jerusalem. At the end of this passage, Luke says:

⁴⁰ Now the Child continued to grow and to become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the favor of God was upon Him.

And then just a few verses later, in 2:52, it says:

⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and people.

Jesus kept *increasing in wisdom*. These two statements bracket an example of Jesus' wisdom as a boy. Most of you know the story. When Jesus is 12 his parents travel up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover as they did every year. But Luke tells us that this year, something different happened. Let's start reading in verse 43:

⁴³ and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days required, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but His parents were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Instead, they thought that He was somewhere in the caravan, and they went a day's journey; and then they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ And when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for Him. ⁴⁶ Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

A Jewish boy was considered a man at age 13, but here is Jesus, a boy of 12, sitting among the scribes and Rabbis as a learner. He is interacting. He is *asking them questions*. Can you picture it? We raised three boys, and I can tell you that at age 12, this was not how they were spending their time. At that age they were riding their bikes, jumping on the trampoline, playing on their X-Box and other such things. But Jesus is sitting among and interacting with the teachers of Israel, and Luke says:

⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

The scribes, the Rabbis, everyone who heard Jesus as he is interacting in this setting *were amazed* at Jesus. They were *amazed at His understanding and answers*. The sense is that they were "besides themselves with amazement." In our day, we would post this to social media and get a 100,000 "likes" because it would be so amazing. What they saw in this 12-year-old boy was exceptional. What they saw was wisdom. And Luke highlights this by bracketing this story with the two statements about Jesus' growing wisdom. He was just 12 years old, but he was wise.

Years later when Jesus begins his ministry, his teaching was such that it continued to provoke amazement because of the power and wisdom with which he taught. Let's look at a couple of examples of how Jesus' wisdom was revealed in his teaching ministry.

B. Jesus' Wisdom Revealed in His Teaching Ministry

In Matthew 13, we read of a time when Jesus teaches in his hometown. In verse 54, it says,

⁵⁴ And He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, with the result that they were astonished,

This is the same word that we saw in Luke 2. The people in Jesus' hometown were amazed. They were *astonished*. They said . . .

*and said, "Where did this man acquire this wisdom and these miraculous powers?
⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is His mother not called Mary, and His brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man acquire all these things?" ⁵⁷ And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not dishonored except in his hometown and in his own household."*

The people who knew Jesus as he grew up tried to put all the facts together to make sense of what they were hearing from Jesus, and it just didn't make sense. They knew his dad, his mom, and his siblings. He was just a *carpenter's son*. They knew he didn't have any formal rabbinical training and yet here he was teaching with profound *wisdom* and exhibiting *miraculous powers*. Unfortunately, they *took offense at him* rather than receive the wisdom he could have offered them. Jesus is wise. His hometown saw it.

In Mark 1:21, we find another example of how people responded to Jesus' teaching. It says:

²¹ They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and began to teach. ²² And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

This passage doesn't use the term "wisdom," but we see this same response of amazement to the power, and wisdom of Jesus' teaching. They were amazed it says, because he was teaching *as one having authority, and not as the scribes*. There was something categorically different about Jesus' teaching. Typically, rabbis would cite other rabbis to support what they taught, but Jesus didn't do that. He didn't cite anyone else to support his interpretation of the law, because he, in and of himself, was the ultimate authority. And so, Jesus didn't say, "As rabbi so-and-so says," he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you . . ." (e.g., John 6:47). He spoke with authority. He spoke with wisdom. And people were amazed.

Let's look at one more example from Jesus' teaching ministry. In Matthew 12, we find a growing controversy between Jesus and the religious leaders of the day. Jesus is doing things that the religious leaders believe violated the law of God – things like healing on the Sabbath. In that context the scribes and Pharisees come to Jesus and challenge him to produce a sign. But Jesus refused to do so, and he said to them:

³⁹ But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves a sign; and so no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as JONAH WAS IN THE STOMACH OF THE SEA MONSTER FOR THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

Two weeks ago, when we looked at Solomon, we saw how he was considered the wisest man on earth. As Steve mentioned, he contributed a great deal of content to the wisdom literature that we have in our Bibles. He was so wise that the *Queen of the South* (i.e., The Queen of Sheba) traveled from a foreign land to seek his wisdom because there was no one like him in all the world (1 Kings 10:1-3). And yet, Jesus says, *something greater than Solomon is here*. Someone who far surpasses Solomon’s wisdom is here. Jesus is talking about himself. Solomon was the wisest man in all the world in his day, but Jesus is greater! He is greater in his wisdom!

The gospels reveal Jesus’ wisdom. He was wise as a boy. And as a man, his teaching and life revealed a kind of wisdom that time and time again caused people to be amazed. There has never been anyone like him. **If you want to become wise, follow Jesus.** Walk as his disciple.

Now, what we see demonstrated in the pages of the gospels is explicitly taught in the epistles. Paul talks about Jesus’ wisdom in a number of places. I want to look briefly at one passage.

II. Jesus’ Wisdom – The Epistles

In Paul’s letter to the Colossians, he writes this in 2:1:

¹ For I want you to know how great a struggle I have in your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and that they would attain to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,

Paul has toiled and struggled to see the gospel established among the Gentiles. Specifically, he wanted them to come to a true knowledge about Christ, whom he calls *God’s mystery*. And he goes on to say why he wants them to come to true knowledge of Jesus. It is because he is the source of wisdom. In verse 3 he says about Jesus,

³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

There were false teachers in Colossae seeking to pull the Colossians away from Christ. They were putting forth other ways to wisdom and knowledge found in their doctrine and practices. But Paul's point here is that Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the source of true *wisdom and knowledge*. 1 Corinthians 1:24 says that Jesus is "the wisdom of God." He doesn't just have wisdom; he IS wisdom. And so, **if you want to become wise, follow Jesus**. Be a disciple of Jesus.

Now, as we come to the end of our time, I want to spend a little time talking about what this means. What does it look like to follow Jesus. For the first disciples, they literally followed him and observed his life, and they received his teachings. What does it mean for us? Let me give you three thoughts.

First, **choose to trust him**. I mean this in a couple of senses. First, you must choose to trust him for salvation. This is the starting point of following Jesus. You come to him and acknowledge that you are a sinner, that you have lived in rebellion to God, and you look to what Jesus did through his righteous life, his atoning death, and victorious resurrection for a right standing with God. By faith, you believe that he did these things that you might be forgiven, washed clean, and be given a new spiritual life with God. This is the starting point of a life of discipleship. One critical thing that happens when we trust him in this way is that the Spirit of God comes to reside within us. He begins to transform our hearts with a desire and ability to follow Jesus. And so you must choose to trust him in this sense.

But there is a second sense in which I mean this. You must **choose to trust him** in the sense that you decide that Jesus knows best. If your approach to following Jesus is to follow him only when it makes sense to you, you are not actually following him and his perfect wisdom. Jesus says some hard things at times. Things like, "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*" (Matt. 5:44). He said, "*Whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it*" (Matt. 16:25). He said, ". . . *none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions*" (Luke 14:33).

If Jesus is perfect in his wisdom, then he is right about these things . . . right? These hard things reflect wisdom about how we are to live our lives. And so, you have a choice. Will you choose to follow Jesus' wisdom or go with what seems best to you? If you are going to follow him, you need to choose to trust him. Always. About everything he says and asks of you.

Here's my second suggestions. **Be a student of his words**. Pay attention to the things Jesus taught. He taught about all kinds of things that matter to us as we walk through this life. Just think about the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). He taught about what a blessed life looks like. Typically, we think the good life is one with plenty of money, and time off, and great trips, and a nice house, etc. But Jesus said that the truly good and desirable life is one in which we are poor in spirit (5:3), in which we mourn (5:4), and are gentle (5:5), in which we hunger and thirst for righteousness (5:6), and are merciful (5:7), pure in heart (5:8), and peace makers (5:9).

You want to be wise regarding money, or worry, or dealing with someone who has sinned against you? Jesus taught about these things. Do you want to know how to find true rest or build

your life on a solid foundation that lasts? Jesus taught about these things. He taught about prayer, and fasting, and what true worship looks like. He taught about how important our unity is as a church. He taught about what it looks like to abide in him, and servanthood, and what it means to be a neighbor. He taught about the nature of the kingdom of God and how to live in it. He taught about how not to waste your life.

I could go on and on, but you get the point. Everything Jesus taught is true wisdom. Everything. If we truly want to be wise people, we must **be students of his word**. We will become wise as we hear and then do what he says.

Here's my last suggestion, **observe his life**. Jesus not only reveals wisdom through his teaching, he also does it through the model of his life. And so, pay attention to how he lived. Everything he did was an expression of wisdom. We can observe how he dealt with temptation (Matt 4), what it looks like to have compassion for the poor, the sick, and the outcast. He touched lepers. We can observe how he spent time in relationship with sinners. We can observe his gentleness and humility in his interactions. We can observe the dignity that he expressed towards women. We can pay attention to his rhythms of work and rest, and his life of prayer and seeking the Father. Be a student of his words. Observe his life.

Let me give one specific example of how we will become wise if we will do this. Think about the topic of greatness. This was something that Jesus' disciples argued about. Who was the greatest? And our world has ideas about greatness to, right. It is about being on top. Having power. Being the best and other such things. Is this true wisdom? Well, Jesus taught about greatness, right? In Matt. 23:11-12, Jesus said.

¹¹ But the greatest of you shall be your servant. ¹² Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

We should be a student of this teaching. But we can also observe how Jesus lived out this wisdom. In John 13, on the night in which he was betrayed, when no one else was willing to humble himself to do the dirty task of washing feet, Jesus rose from the table, laid aside his outer garments, and took up the towel of a servant to kneel before each of his disciples to wash their feet (see John 13:3-5). Jesus both taught and modeled what true greatness looks like. All of this is wisdom, because Jesus is wisdom from God.

When it comes to wisdom, there is no one like Jesus. He is wisdom from God. Everything he said and everything he did reveals wisdom. Be a student of his words. Observe how he lived his life. Choose to trust him. Walk as his disciple, because the one who walks with the wise becomes wise.