

Sermon Trinity 8

1 Kings 3:5,7-12, Romans 8:28-30, Matthew 13:44-52

God's Wisdom for Today

Our readings today are really about wisdom. It is a quality that we often associate with the old and learned. The scriptures and life often correct this. The phrase “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings come the wisdom of God” should be a phrase familiar to you all. It comes from psalm 8. If its source is not familiar and if richness of English idiom around you has become thin I hope that you might have known it at work.

Today we baptise a new member of a human family to be also a new member of Christ's family – the Church. Parents are often amazed by what comes out of their children's mouths – not always wisdom of course but they do seem often to separate the wheat from the chaff – ah sorry I'm using another biblical phrase. They often go to the heart of what matters. Sometimes parents keep what we use to call “line books” sayings and happenings so funny so “where did that come from” they have to be remembered.

I'm sure that Elodie will be no exception in this regard. Yesterday little Sid aged maybe 4 or 5 came into church dragging his mother. “Where's God” he demanded. Well he's everywhere and especially in us was my response.... “but will I see him will he come out today?” I had a meeting and had to leave him in the capable hands of one of our teachers in the congregation.

Distilling what really matters in life is wisdom. Our readings reinforce this task. It is a task that can come harder with age not easier. The wisdom of God different from the wisdom of the world. Our first reading recalls how Solomon requested the gift of wisdom and understanding instead of material goods or power. Note that as God offers to grant Solomon a wish He recognises his youth, his worldly inexperience and the enormity of his task. As a youth Solomon asks for an understanding heart to distinguish right from wrong. God grants him unrivaled wisdom and this above all else is what Solomon is remembered for.

Yes Solomon come to have great riches and uses them to decorate the temple, honour God and much else but its his wisdom that his real treasure. The psalm reminds us that God's commands are more precious than gold.

Your words are my treasure, O Lord, more precious than gold. Your kindness is my comfort, your laws my delight. I follow your decrees, they shed light and grant understanding.

St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, one of his greatest; shows us how the love of God is the beginning of wisdom : for those we love work with us and so it is with God as he seeks for us to cooperate in all that is good.

We have been having a lot of parables recently in our Gospel readings and today like a final flourish of a great firework in the night sky we have some crackers! Treasure and pearls are the images of the day. As we know nearly all of the parables begin with the phrase “the kingdom of heaven is like” . It is not something that can be seen and yet it is something that can be shown – not not illustrated in word paintings like parables but in the lives of people. Remember before Jesus illustrates what matters “the kingdom” with these parables he has taught the sermon on the mount with the beatitudes – *Blessed are the poor, blessed are the humble.....theirs is the kingdom of heaven and they shall inherit the earth.*

Perhaps we might begin to see why Jesus also says that unless you become like a little child you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven – they are generally uncluttered with false riches and pride.

So now Jesus gives us more parables related to the Kingdom of God, including the treasure in the field, the pearl of great price, and treasures new and old. He highlights the immense value of the Kingdom of Heaven, comparing it to a treasure hidden in a field and a pearl of great price. It emphasizes the worthiness of sacrificing everything to possess and experience the Kingdom’s blessings.

Solomon would some to know that the exercise of wisdom was hard and impossible with God's help. So behind these little parables are many aspects of the earthly journey to God's heavenly kingdom. There is joy and sacrifice – this is the response of the person who discovers the treasure and the merchant who finds the valuable pearl exemplifies the joy and willingness to sacrifice worldly possessions in order to obtain the Kingdom’s eternal riches. There is discernment and understanding in relation to the mysteries of the Kingdom. Jesus's likening of the scribe instructed about the Kingdom to a householder who brings out treasures both old and new suggests the need to appreciate the timeless truths of Scripture while also being receptive to new revelations from God. God does not stop showing himself with the last page of the bible – he is at work now in you and me. There is judgement – something we often shy away

from. The parable of the dragnet highlights the final separation of the righteous and the wicked at the end of time. The choices we make have consequences – it is important to make choices that align with God’s righteousness and not reject His Kingdom and values. We get it wrong of course – but the loving patience of God was last week’s parable.

The Parables are made up of wonderful stories and rich images we can carry with us through our lives. However when we hear the parables remember the reality they point to like a little child that won’t let a simple question go: Jesus’s insistence that the Kingdom of Heaven is love made perfect and is always close at hand – the parables are always for today not yesterday or tomorrow.

*The Revd Fr. David Wylie RN
July 30th 2023*