



Mount Olive Devotions by Pastor Glenn Monson

The Week of the Holy Trinity (June 13-17, 2022)

Monday

Proverbs 3:13-18

¹³Happy are those who find wisdom and those who get understanding, ¹⁴for her income is better than silver and her revenue better than gold. ¹⁵She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. ¹⁶Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

¹⁷Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

¹⁸She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.

In the *Lutheran Study Bible* these verses from Proverbs 3 are entitled “The True Wealth.” Basically wisdom is held up as the source of life as well as the source of abundance. There are many who would agree with this. One newspaper columnist, Harvey MacKay, often peppers his columns with words of wisdom about business dealings as well as general advice on how to get along with others. MacKay, it seems to me, has adopted this notion completely that true wealth is the result of wisdom, whether one finds oneself wealthy by worldly standards or not. Some of the titles of his books could be right out of the book of Proverbs: *Dig Your Well Before You’re Thirsty*, and *Beware the Naked Man Who Offers You His Shirt*. It’s no surprise that contemporary writers and ancient writers agree: happy are those who find wisdom.

Prayer

God of All Wisdom, we thank and praise you for the guidance of your Holy Spirit through Scripture, through ancient wisdom, and through your people, the Church. Give us open minds and hearts to receive your wisdom with joy, and help us to live it out. In your holy name we pray. AMEN.

Tuesday

Ephesians 1:15-19

¹⁵I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may perceive what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

This is part of a prayer that St. Paul prayed for his beloved Ephesians. Notice how thankful he is for their faith and love. But then notice what his prayer is for them: that they may be given “a spirit of wisdom and revelation.” Why does he pray for this? So that they might perceive the hope to which

they are called, they might know the riches of their inheritance, and they might appreciate the “immeasurable greatness of God’s power in all who believe.” It’s almost as if Paul is saying that yes, your heart and soul are engaged, now engage your *mind* as well. Sometimes we may think that faith and love are exclusive of wisdom. Perhaps we have the notion that either a person is gifted intellectually *or* a person has a deep faith or a compassionate heart. Paul says otherwise. He says that all of these traits are needed, and all are equally celebrated. We need to cultivate a deep faith and a profound love for all people, *and* we need to dig deep into the mysteries of life and faith. Why? So that our joy might be complete.

Prayer

Gracious and All-Wise God, thank you for our minds. Thank you for wise scholars, persistent scientists, thoughtful theologians, and master teachers who show us the mysteries of life. Grant us always a deep faith, a broad love, and a hunger for godly wisdom, so that we might be all that you have designed us to be. In your Son’s name we pray. AMEN.

Wednesday

Luke 2:41-50

⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents were unaware of this. ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you.” ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”^[k] ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them.

I love this story about the boy Jesus. The part I find most fascinating is the description of his action in the temple. He is “listening to [the teachers] and asking them questions.” This is a pattern that will continue for Jesus’ entire ministry. A number of years ago, a pastor, Martin Copenhaver, wrote a book entitled *Jesus is the Question*. In this book he details what his research had unveiled, that in the New Testament, Jesus asks 307 questions and only answers 3! As Copenhaver says, we often think of Jesus as the Answer Man, but he is quite the opposite; Jesus is the one who invites us to discover for ourselves what it means to follow him, to live the crucified life, and to know real wisdom. Jesus doesn’t tell us the answer to these questions, but continually asks questions of his disciples and us, so that we might discover it for ourselves. So if you feel like you just don’t know much when it comes to faith, take heart; questioning is at the heart of the life of a disciple.

Prayer

Thank you for modeling for us humility and curiosity, Dear Lord. You are both the great Learner and the great Teacher. Encourage us in our quest to learn what following you entails. Guide us with faithful colleagues and wise mentors. Bring us closer to you each day as we seek your ways. We ask this in your precious name. AMEN.

Thursday

Psalm 124

¹ If it had not been the LORD who was on our side —let Israel now say—

² if it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when our enemies attacked us,

³ then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us;

⁴ then the flood would have swept us away; the torrent would have gone over us;

⁵ then over us would have gone the raging waters.

⁶ Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as prey to their teeth.

⁷ We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the hunters; the snare is broken,

and we have escaped. ⁸ Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

This is the central confession of God’s people throughout the ages: our help is in the name of the Lord. There have been many times through the ages that it seemed unlikely God’s people would endure. Certainly while in Egypt and much later, in exile, the people of Israel wondered if they would survive as a people. The followers of Jesus also must have felt very vulnerable in their modest beginnings. Only a few followers in cities scattered around the Mediterranean basin formed the basis of the earliest Christian community. What were the chances they would survive? And then down through the ages, God’s people across the globe have endured all sorts of attempts to snuff out the faith, and yet here we are today, still proclaiming the Good News and following in the way of Jesus. What accounts for this? It is that “our help is in the name of the Lord.” Today again we might be tempted to despair and say, “The Church is in decline. Will it survive? Will God’s people finally disappear from the earth?” And the answer once again is, “The Church will live, for our help is in the name of the Lord.”

Prayer

Thank you, Almighty One, for sustaining your people down through the ages. From slavery in Egypt to the present war in Ukraine, your people have been threatened with extinction, yet you sustain us. You give us strength. You give us hope. You give us courage. Bless all those who feel attacked by enemies within and without these days. Protect, bless, and strengthen your people, we pray. In Jesus’ name. AMEN.

Friday

Ephesians 4:7, 11-16

⁷ But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

¹¹ He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴ We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

These verses tell us clearly why the people of God are a gifted people. We are gifted so that we might "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come... to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." That's it. We are given gifts, not for ourselves, but for the building up of the people of God. Do you love to care for children? Use that gift to build up the body of Christ. Do you have a gift for hospitality? Use that gift to build up Christ's body. Do you love to teach or to pray or to work with your hands or do work of administration or work of compassion? Then do what you do to build up the body of Christ. Notice what Paul also says about the effect of this building up. The final goal is not finally that God's people would be super human, but that the whole body of Christ might be working properly and this would manifest itself in love. In short, we are built up so that we might be a conduit of God's love to the world. As God said to Abraham, "You are blessed to be a blessing."

Prayer

Gracious and Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gifts you have given your people. Thank you for workers of compassion, faithful teachers, skilled preachers, and passionate evangelists. Help all your people to know their gifts and grant that each of us would use all we have to bless others and bring glory to you. In the name of Christ we pray. AMEN.