

MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH; November 12, 2023
23rd Sunday after Trinity; Singers: youth praise team
Praise music: Krista; Hymns and service music: Rebekah

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 111

PASTOR: Praise the LORD.

ALL: I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

PASTOR: Great are the works of the LORD;

ALL: they are pondered by all who delight in them.

PASTOR: He provided redemption for his people; He ordained his covenant forever

ALL: holy and awesome is His name.

PASTOR: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;

all who follow his precepts have good understanding.

ALL: To him belongs eternal praise.

HYMN #147 “We Plow the Fields and Scatter”

PASTOR ONLY: *Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

PASTOR & CONGREGATION: *We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen*

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE:

READER: Becky Kruse

EPISTLE LESSON: *Philippians 3:17-21 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the*

pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matthew 22:15-22 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. 16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. 17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" 18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? 19 Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, 20 and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" 21 "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." 22 When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.*

READER: Here ends the reading of God’s Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

GLORIA PATRI: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS & PRAYER

PRAISE SONGS: 1 or 2 praise songs chosen by KRISTA

SERMON: “A PRIZE POSSESSION” Proverbs 8:11-22
Pastor Tom Olson *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

MARVEL: I marvel every time we read that gospel lesson about the Pharisees trying to ask Jesus that trick lose/lose question about paying taxes. How did Jesus answer that impossible question? How do we answer difficult questions? The Wisdom of God. How do we make good decisions? The Wisdom of God. Many people are in great need of wisdom. They suffer because of poor decisions. Believe me that I have made my share of unwise decisions over the years. Wisdom is A PRIZE POSSESSION. Let’s talk about it.

I. WISDOM: MORE VALUABLE THAN MONEY

Proverbs 8:11 For wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

WEALTH: I suspect that one of the most passionate pursuits in the world, is the pursuit of wealth. Wealth management is a major industry. People push hard to get careers that will produce wealth. In a recent interview a 76-year-old billionaire oil tanker owner from Rhode Island said that “far too much importance is placed on money these days.” His only son, a teen-ager, died and he would gladly give up his fortune to have his son back. Here is King Solomon’s commentary. Remember that he was one of the wealthiest men in history. He says that WISDOM is more valuable than rubies, precious gems, great wealth. Notice the strong word he uses here: NOTHING can compare with wisdom!

SOLOMON: When God told young Solomon to ask for anything, Solomon asked for WISDOM. God was so pleased with that request, instead of asking for wealth, that God promised Him wealth would follow the wisdom.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

PRAYERS: I find myself praying less and less for “things” or even healing for people. I find myself more and more praying for WISDOM for people in their decision making in life. Wealth and possessions without wisdom can HURT YOU. But wisdom gives us the ability to handle whatever comes our way, wealth or poverty, health or illness. And wisdom always leads to blessings. WISDOM IS MORE VALUABLE THAN MONEY.

II. WISDOM: A COMPANION OF ALL VIRTUES

Proverbs 8:12 "I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion."

SISTERS: Some people put it this way. Wisdom has three sisters: prudence, knowledge and discretion. What are they?

PRUDENCE=a quality in a person that allows him to choose the sensible course. It includes caution, foresight and the recognition of providence.

KNOWLEDGE=comes from education, scholarship and science. It is a body of accurate data and facts. Knowledge is the opposite is ignorance.

DISCRESSION=has the idea of moderation and restraint. One who is discrete is not hasty but thinks things through well. An impulse buyer is not discrete. A discrete person

does research, gains knowledge and then can be prudent and choose a sensible course.

HASTE: Most every poor decision I have made has been done quickly, without research and prayerful thought. Wisdom from God spares us a lot of unnecessary pain. All kinds of good virtues accompany wisdom. The end result is a good life that money cannot buy.

III. WISDOM: THE FOUNDATION OF A GOOD LIFE

Proverbs 8:13-21 To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. 14 Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power. 15 By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; 16 by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth. 17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. 18 With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. 19 My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. 20 I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, 21 bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full.

MARRIAGE: When Sharon and I got married, the pastor did not do pre-marital counseling. We looked for an alternative. A Mennonite pastor from Stone Lake, Wisconsin was hosting a video Advanced Seminar from the Institute in Basic Life Principles. Sharon and I had both attended the basic seminar and learned so many helpful principles for life from the Word of God, that we decided to attend this advanced seminar for our pre-marital counseling. Not only did we learn many excellent principles for life from the Scriptures, but we met some very wonderful people who were trying to live by Biblical principles. The young pastor and his wife were

building a home and business without debt. We took a vacation Sunday and visited his little Mennonite church that met in his home and saw how the Wisdom of the Bible was helping them to build a good life with modest income and no debt.

FOOLISHNESS: Many people today are ruined by terrible choices, excessive borrowing, chemical addictions, foolish investments, and destructive relationships. Just the other day I drove past a beggar in Apple Valley and asked myself what kind of poor decisions brought him to that point. The most common one is taking drugs.

ROOFERS: One the other hand, I observed the Hispanic workers who installed our church roof and siding. They worked hard. After school their wives and children came and helped them until dark. Now when you go to Menards there are many Hispanic men purchasing their own materials and bringing them out to their own trucks to use in their own thriving businesses. That is the result of wisdom and will lead to a good life for their families.

BEST: Many people laugh at those who practice morality, follow the ten commandments and include faith in Christ in their lives. But time proves that to be the best course of action leading to a good life. Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom... FOURTHLY...

IV. WISDOM: THE WITNESS OF SALVATION

Proverbs 8:22 "The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old;

MYSTERY: There is a mysterious tie between Wisdom, the Creation of the World and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I guess that is why Solomon makes it clear that “faith” or also said, “the fear of the Lord” is “the beginning of wisdom. The Apostle Paul addresses this deep topic in 1 Corinthians with folks who prided themselves in wisdom but were making foolish and immoral decisions.

CHRIST IS THE WISDOM OF GOD *1 Corinthians 1:20-25*
Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For 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. 22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

INVITATION: The first step to gaining wisdom is to invite THE INCARNATE WISDOM into your heart...believe in Jesus as your Savior. The second step is to get to know the Bible, the Word of God, the written Word, the Wisdom of God and apply it to your life.

REGRETS: This week I listened to several women who had been very wild in their twenties and now were in their thirties and wanted desperately to be a mom and have children. But because of they rejected morality and wisdom of God, they now were in a place that most of the family-oriented men were married or simply didn't want a wife and mother of his children that had slept with dozens of men. These women were weeping over how foolish they had been to believe the progressive feminist lies about sexual liberty and abortion and

family life. How many now realize that the one or two abortions they had in their promiscuous days were the only chance they ever had to have a child. Now no men are interested in them. Some of them wept almost hysterically when they realized that they had ruined their lives by immoral living.

MEN: Many men feel the same way, now having diseases or the devastating consequences of chemical addictions, and immorality, wasting the strongest years of their life. How they wish they had listened to the Word of God. They still could come to Christ but would forever live with the consequences of their foolishness.

PRIZE: Wisdom is a PRIZE POSSESSION. We need to gain it while we are young. Our Sunday school children are so fortunate to come from godly homes and have a chance at least to get the wisdom of God at an early age. I was counselling a very foolish man who had gotten himself into jail. I urged him to read one chapter of Proverbs each day. Soon he had an auto mechanics business and today is a successful finishing carpenter.

NOW: It is never too late to start walking on a better path. God's way is the best...it is a way of wisdom. I received Jesus as my Savior at age 14 and I have never regretted it. Our pastor had us read one chapter of the Bible each day and that too saved me from so much trouble. Wisdom is A PRIZE POSSESSION. I still need more wisdom to finish my race of life well. One of the prayers that God promises to answer every time is to give us wisdom if we ask for it. Won't you join me in seeking God's wisdom in this foolish generation? We will then be a good example for others to follow. Amen

Now may the peace of God, that surpasses all human comprehension, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen

HYMN #459 “Lord, Speak to Me, That I May Speak”

LORD’S PRAYER: *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

BENEDICTION: The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

DOXOLOGY & THREE-FOLD AMEN

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson