

Worship Service

BY DAVID G. MILLER

Meditation

Brethren, when we read that Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, let us recollect what wisdom is. Wisdom is, I suppose, the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)[†]

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

The Summons: based on Psalm 111

Lift up your hearts in thanksgiving to the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Great are the Lord's works, full of majesty and splendor.

Praise will be his forever and ever.

His words are truth and justice; faithfulness informs his law.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Holy and awe inspiring is his name.

Praise will be his forever and ever.

The fear of this Lord is the beginning of all wisdom.

They who live in it grow in understanding.

Processional Hymn

"Be Thou My Vision"

Be thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art—
thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my Wisdom, and thou my true Word;
 I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
 thou my great Father, I thy true son;
 thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
 thou my Inheritance, now and always;
 thou and thou only, first in my heart,
 High King of heaven, my Treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
 may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
 Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
 still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

*Irish hymn, 8th century; translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880-1931);
 versed by Eleanor H. Hull (1860-1935)*

Tune: IRISH MELODY

Morning Collect (Unison)

**Be our vision, High King of Heaven:
 we turn to you for wisdom on our way.
 Inform our minds so that we may have the very mind of Christ:
 may we understand our place and our purpose in your world.
 Help us in the power of your Holy Spirit
 to hear your true word to us
 and to respond in living worship to you. Amen.**

The Witness of the Old Testament: Proverbs 8:1-13, 22-31

In which Wisdom proclaims herself the treasure of God and humankind:

Does not wisdom call,
 and does not understanding raise her voice?
 On the heights, beside the way,
 at the crossroads she takes her stand;
 beside the gates in front of the town,
 at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
 "To you, O people, I call,
 and my cry is to all that live.
 O simple ones, learn prudence;
 acquire intelligence, you who lack it.
 Hear, for I will speak noble things,
 and from my lips will come what is right;
 for my mouth will utter truth;
 wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

All the words of my mouth are righteous;
 there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.
They are all straight to one who understands
 and right to those who find knowledge.
Take my instruction instead of silver,
 and knowledge rather than choice gold;
for wisdom is better than jewels,
 and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.
I, wisdom, live with prudence,
 and I attain knowledge and discretion.
The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the way of evil
 and perverted speech I hate....

The LORD created me at the beginning of his work,
 the first of his acts of long ago.
Ages ago I was set up,
 at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
 when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped,
 before the hills, I was brought forth—
when he had not yet made earth and fields,
 or the world's first bits of soil.
When he established the heavens, I was there,
 when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,
 when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
 so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
 rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
 and delighting in the human race.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Confessional Hymn

“God Is Love; His Mercy Brightens”

God is love; his mercy brightens
all the path in which we rove;
bliss he wakes, and woe he lightens:
God is wisdom, God is love.

Chance and change are busy ever;
man decays and ages move;
but his mercy waneth never:
God is wisdom, God is love.

E'en the hour that darkest seemeth
will his changeless goodness prove;
from the mist his brightness streameth:
God is wisdom, God is love.

He with earthly cares entwineth
hope and comfort from above;
everywhere his glory shineth:
God is wisdom, God is love.

John Bowring (1825)
Tune: SUSSEX

Prayer of Confession

We come before a God of wisdom who knows our hearts.
We come before a God of love who has redeemed our lives.
We come before a God of mercy who hears our cries.
Let us confess our sins in humility and hope.

(Members offer silent prayers.)

Together, we pray:

God of wisdom and love, we confess that we have turned from your ways to our own wills. We have worked to justify our own ways of thinking; we have thought of new ways of sinning. Yet you have brought us to this place and in your presence we bow. Your ways are not our ways; your words are not our words. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so you are above us. Yet you love us, and that love calls us to confess. While we were still sinning, you have loved us. What a fearful, faithful, fundamental pull your love is upon our lives. We once again ask for your mercy and forgiveness. Help us to mend our lives. Heal our minds, holy, holy God. Amen.

Hear these words of assurance:

“My friends, think what sort of people you are, whom God has called” and know that we are forgiven in God’s mercy and grace. Amen.

The Witness of the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 1:18-29

In which God’s wisdom overthrows the established intellectual and spiritual order of the world:

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Prayers of the People

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

God of vision, wisdom, love, and mercy, we hear your attributes proclaimed. We sing your praise. We bow beneath your majesty.

You have taught us that it is in respecting and responding to who you are that we find the wise way. Teach us, we pray, how to build upon that firm foundation, not the manipulating wisdom that achieves our own will, but the palace of wisdom that celebrates your work and will in this world.

And because we know who you are and what you are doing in this world, we come to you now bearing the burdens of our family, our friends, the world and its concerns. We give them to you, praying “Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**”

(As members offer requests ending with "Lord, in your mercy," the congregation responds, "hear our prayers.")

Lord, listen to your children praying. In your wisdom, act in mercy to redeem these concerns. Give us wisdom to be the answers to the very prayers we make. Give us courage to do your will in this world. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

The Witness of the Gospels (all standing): Matthew 7:24-29

In which Jesus gives a parable concerning wise and foolish building:

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell--and great was its fall!"

Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

The gospel of our Lord
Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Hymn of Response

"Wisdom's Way"

Word of God, by Wisdom spoken,
flung the stars through cosmic space;
sculpted mountains, scooped the oceans,
imaged self in every race.

Love and Wisdom now Incarnate,
entered earth's frame through the womb;
lived with purpose, died for others,
rose victorious from the tomb.

Wisdom's Spirit, faithful Mentor,
guide from darkness into light;
Unpredictable Enabler,
stirring sense, restoring sight.

Wisdom's way, an open secret,
free to all without a price;
wrapped in love, so freely offered
by the Way, the Truth, the Life.

William R. O'Brien (2009)

Tune: WISDOM'S WAY, Kurt Kaiser (2009)

Music © 2009 Kurt Kaiser Music

(pp.53-55 of this volume)

Worship Offerings

All things come from thee, O Lord,
And of thine own have we given thee.

Doxology

O God of Wisdom, God of Truth
teach us your ways, reveal your word;
help us through all our lives to move
within your will, O Grace-Full Lord. Amen

Tune: OLD 100TH

Benediction

The way of the Lord is wise.

The council of the Lord leads to understanding.

Walk in the fear of the Lord and gain wisdom.

Humble yourself before the Lord and gain insight.

In living this way, you will reveal God's mind to this foolish, frustrated
world. You will know yourself and you will be fully known.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

NOTE

† Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "The Fourfold Treasure," preached on September 27, 1871, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in Newington, England (available online at www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0991.htm)



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