

April 23, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Peace in Chaos
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Proverbs 3:1-26.

1. What is a basic explanation of wisdom?
2. Have you ever tried to comprehend the kind of wisdom that spoke all creation into existence?
3. Assuming that wisdom is as valuable as this text claims it is (vv.14-15), what should be our response toward gaining it?
4. What three commands did Solomon give his son for gaining wisdom (vv.1,3,21)?
5. If you are a parent, how have you taught wisdom to your child? If you are a child, think about how your parent tried to teach you wisdom.
6. In what ways does godly wisdom bring peace to our lives?

PEACE THROUGH WISDOM **Proverbs 3:1-26**

There have been some important peace treaties in our nation's history. The first treaty ever signed by American leaders was the Treaty of Paris (1783). This treaty officially ended our war of independence with Great Britain and recognized the United States as a legitimate nation. French leaders fully expected the United States to be a small player on the national scene because they granted the

new nation all the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Appalachian mountains. Britain was more generous and granted that the nation stretch from the ocean to the Mississippi River. The rest is history.

It was nice for wise men to draw up a treaty that brought peace to our nation. However, that peace was short-lived. Twenty-nine years later we were at war with Britain again in the War of 1812. That war came to a close with the treaty of Ghent, signed in Ghent, Belgium at the end of 1814.

About thirty-one years slipped by and we were at it again. This time the adversary was Mexico because our leaders were very sure that this growing nation needed the land we now call Texas. In 1845 we annexed the land, fought a war with Mexico to secure it, and ended the war with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February 1948.

One particular member of the House of Representatives in those days was strongly opposed to America going to war against Mexico. His name was Abraham Lincoln. It is interesting to note that already in those early years of the nation there was ideological and political polarization similar to what we are experiencing today. For the most part the Southern Democrats were in favor of taking Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, and Wyoming from the Mexicans by force. The Republicans in the northern states were generally opposed to the idea.

The treaty that ended the Mexican-American war didn't do much to bring peace between the political and ideological factions. So, within thirteen years our nation was at war with itself – President Lincoln, the politician who opposed going to war with Mexico, being the lightning rod at the center of this new war.

We could go on and mention war and conflict after war and conflict that our nation has been engaged in and note the various treaties that ended those conflicts. But the results are just more of the same testimony of failure. Why didn't our leaders send intelligent and wise negotiators who could draw up long-lasting, valid treaties? No doubt they thought they did. Surely, the wisest of our wise men were the ones who sat down at those treaty tables to resolve the conflicts and promise peace. I suppose if it were possible to interview those brilliant negotiators, we might have to agree with Job's conclusion about the self-appointed wise men who proposed ways for him to

gain peace with God. He said of them, “*No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you*” (Job 12:2).

Why do peace treaties among nations and attempts to gain peace within ourselves typically fail? It is because we do not base those conclusions about peace on wisdom. “Oh” someone will retort, “Those men who negotiated our treaties were the wisest men available.” And surely people who write books and hold seminars about gaining inner peace are extremely wise. Really? Maybe that conclusion flows from a faulty understanding of wisdom.

True wisdom is from God and only from God. The person who reads, studies, meditates on the Word of God has far more wisdom than the West Point graduate who has years of experience in war and drawing up treaties. The country preacher who walks in close fellowship with God would have been a better choice to send to the peace talks.

If we are going to experience the peace of God in our hearts on an ongoing, daily basis, we will need the wisdom of God as our guide and foundation. What is it? How do you get it?

Wisdom is Priceless.

Wisdom is priceless because it is the nature of our Creator. Solomon taught that *The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew* (vv.19-20). How valuable to you is the commodity that brought all things into existence?

A basic explanation of wisdom is “the ability to put knowledge to work.” That means that a simple possession of knowledge is not the same as wisdom. There is a tendency to think that if a person has several college and post graduate degrees, he or she must be very wise. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many people have gained incredible amounts of knowledge, but they still do foolish things and make unwise decisions. A simple synonym of wisdom might be “common sense.”

Be that as it may, human wisdom, the ability to put knowledge into practice, can be very impressive. It is illustrated by the builder who conceives a building in his mind, draws the plans, collects the materials and is able to put the materials together according to the plan he conceived. Or wisdom is observed when a writer who has great knowledge about facts or ideas and how words fit together well is able to write books that are not only interesting to the reader but which endure the test of time. Or it is like musicians who are able to arrange their much knowledge about how notes and cords fit together in a beautiful piece of music that is pleasant to the ear and soul. Or it is like doctors who have amassed so much knowledge about the human body and are able to put that knowledge to work to the extreme of successfully transplanting a heart from one human body to another.

A most astonishing example of wisdom is the computer engineers who created artificial intelligence that is more dependable than human intelligence. And what about geneticists who have created “DNA scissors” by which they can alter your genes – and they don’t mean your Levi’s.

Humanity’s ability to apply knowledge in very productive ways is astonishing. It reminds me of God’s conclusion about what can happen when humans combine their wisdom. At the incident at Babel, *The LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them* (Genesis 11:6).

What then is the value of the wisdom that is behind the creator of all of human wisdom? By wisdom, that is, the application of knowledge, God created everything. Having stated that truth, Solomon went on to give an example. God applied wisdom to make springs water the earth from beneath and rain, snow, and hail to water the earth from above. That might not sound like a very astonishing feat until we stop to make a very cursory consideration of how weather forms and works. Even that part of creation should impress us with the laws God put in force to control such things.

But then move on to the expanse of the universe and consider solar system after solar system, galaxy after galaxy. What kind of wisdom planned the heavens? Our solar system revolves around the

sun, which is our one star. It is estimated that there are over 200 billion stars in our galaxy, the Milky Way. To this point, astronomers have discovered at least 100 billion galaxies observable in the universe each containing billions of solar systems like ours. And they keep finding new ones every time a better telescope is invented. What kind of wisdom spoke a word and all of that appeared instantaneously with age?

Is it not reasonable to conclude that the created being should esteem the Creator's essential traits most highly? It is not just that God uses wisdom. He is wisdom. Wisdom is an essential trait of our LORD. He is not only known by wisdom, but as wisdom, the author of wisdom, the source of wisdom.

Therefore, nothing counted valuable by most people compares to the value of wisdom. *For the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her (vv.14-15).* What is gold and silver to the Creator? He created every ounce of precious metals, every gem, ruby, jewel in the universe. It is all His. And if He wants more, He merely speaks and it exists. To our Creator, gold is equivalent to asphalt. In His presence the streets are paved with gold.

Ah, but riches are important to the created ones. With them we buy pleasures. With them we purchase temporal security. With them we can even do good works, things that bring glory to our Creator. But, Godly wisdom teaches us that to own His wisdom is infinitely more valuable because the wisdom of God exceeds materialism more than we can imagine. Gaining God's wisdom is better than gaining precious metals. Gaining God's wisdom is more to be desired than acquiring the world's most precious gems.

At this point, the person who truly trusts God and believes His Word will wonder where he or she can get this wisdom. The ultimate expression of God's wisdom is Wisdom incarnated. The Bible speaks of God the Son "*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (*Colossians 2:3*). It is also quite certain that Proverbs chapter eight is a description of God the Son, the unique, one and only Son of God. *The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. . . . 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 workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man (Proverbs 8:22, 27-31).

And God the Father sent God the unique Son to us because He loves us, the beings He created. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).* Can you believe it? God's wisdom is available through faith in His Son who is Wisdom incarnated. So get it!

Gain Wisdom.

Solomon challenged his son and us to gain this amazing wisdom of God. The challenge is found in three commands. The first command: *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments (v.1).* The command is simply, "Do not forget." The implication here is that "Dad" had taken time to teach important lessons to his son.

The second command is, *Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart (v.3).* That is, "Do not let enduring love and dependability forsake you." We must take pains to retain these traits.

The third command is, *My son, do not lose sight of these – keep sound wisdom and discretion (v.21).* The object of the command (*these*) is what Solomon had just taught. Do not lose sight of "teaching, commandments, love, faithfulness." Why? Because these concepts reveal sound wisdom and discretion. Sound wisdom gives us the ability to make knowledge work. Discretion is the ability to sort out situations and circumstances in order to know the best instructions or commands to apply to them.

The implication is that the parent introduces the child to wisdom. God's instruction is for parents to teach their children about Jesus early, regularly, consistently. Teach your children the wisdom God has given us in His Word. Teach your children by taking time to

explain the Bible truths. Teach your children by demonstrating and illustrating Bible truths at work in everyday life. Why? So that your children will desire to gain this wisdom through a right relationship with the LORD through Christ.

Great! What do we do to gain God's wisdom? The method for gaining God's wisdom is found in three verses that many Christians can quote from memory. The first step is to depend on the LORD. The word requires us to trust in the LORD completely. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding (v.5)*. We gain wisdom by trusting completely in the LORD. The Hebrew word for *trust* that is used here is mostly used in the Old Testament in connection with depending on God because of His steadfast love and faithfulness. This is a matter of placing our entire being on God's faithfulness. The heart refers to the whole intellect, emotion, and will. Thus, wisdom comes from submitting all of that to God. In so doing, we will not be "trusting" our own understanding.

When we are trusting completely on the LORD, we are not leaning on our own understanding. The English word "lean" is a good translation of the Hebrew word. The object of our faith is what we lean on. If we depend on our experiences, our knowledge, our feelings, we are not leaning on the Lord. Wisdom is gained when we submit our thinking, planning, feeling to God's truth.

Second, along with trusting in the LORD alone to gain wisdom, we give precedence to God in all matters. *In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths (v.6)*. To acknowledge is to know in the most intimate way. This is the well known Hebrew word *yada*, which speaks of the intimate relationship between a husband and wife. In every situation and circumstance of life, we should learn to know what God's instructions, commands, and, therefore, will would have us do. In such yielding, we walk a straight path which is a life bounded, fenced in, by God's wisdom.

Third, in order to gain God's wisdom, we must fear God and avoid evil. *Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil (v.7)*. The natural thing is to act according to our own wisdom. In contrast to that, we need to exercise awesome respect for God. If we do not have deepest respect for God, we will not be able to identify evil. If we do not identify evil, we will fall into it. That always forfeits peace.

The fear of the LORD is where a right relationship with Him begins and how it continues. That is what the Bible means by, *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7)*. The same truth is found in the statement, *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight (Proverbs 9:10)*. Understanding who God is, how holy He is, that He will punish sin and sinners forever, and that He is able and willing to do all that He promises should cause fear. That fear should cause the sinner to run to Christ who forgives sin and puts His righteousness on our account. That is salvation. The beginning of wisdom is salvation. Saved people know the peace that only Christ gives.

Once we are in right relationship with our Creator, so that He is our Father and we are His children, we find peace by responding well to the LORD's discipline. *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights (vv.11-12)*. Wisdom teaches that the LORD disciplines His children. Human wisdom often despises discipline. Godly wisdom understands that His discipline flows from a heart of love. Wisdom learns from the LORD's discipline.

Wisdom Brings Peace.

Wisdom offers health and long life. That is a good motivation for pursuing a right relationship with the Author of wisdom, the source of wisdom. Physical well-being is found in wisdom. That means a healthy lifestyle. Really. God said that wisdom *will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones (v.8)*. God's wisdom has very practical ramifications. In fact, research affirms God's instruction. Medical research clearly proves the connection between emotional stress and poor health. Being in a right relationship with your Creator through the wisdom found in Christ relieves stress.

Not only does a healthy lifestyle result from practicing God's wisdom, but a lengthy life comes along with it. *Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor (v.16)*. Especially in the Old Testament, length of days was considered a direct blessing

from God. God's wisdom keeps His people from making risky decisions in many practical ways. God's wisdom leads us away from sin and evil practices which are damaging and shorten life. At the very least, God's wisdom makes us incredibly rich with spiritual blessings. And frankly it is possible that the person who submits to God's wisdom will manage their finances wisely.

Another benefit of living in God's wisdom is spiritual well-being. *And they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck (v.22)*. On one hand, godly wisdom benefits the outward part of the person (the neck). On the other hand, godly wisdom gives abundant life to the spiritual side of the person. The soul is the real person, the whole person including the emotions and the spiritual aspect.

Therefore, it only stands to reason that wisdom causes peaceful coexistence. Favor with God results in peace with others. *So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man (v.4)*. Of course, there will always be enemies of the gospel and often personal enemies due to jealousy, envy, and other sins. But when we live in God's wisdom, we will not be causing others to hold us in disfavor because of our foolish sins. Is that really possible? God connects peace with Him and peace with others. *Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men (Romans 14:18)*. *For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man (2 Corinthians 8:21)*.

Peace in chaos is rare but pleasant. Peace in wisdom is pleasant. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace (v.17)*. Who is not longing for a pleasant life? Peace through God's wisdom often removes many conflicts and unfavorable circumstances. But God's peace is also experienced even in the time of difficulty. Why would a person choose to walk an unknown path, when the path of God's wisdom is identified as a peaceful path?

Peace in wisdom is also a very secure condition. *Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet*. Sweet sleep is a wonderful benefit of the peace God gives. It is the illusive goal that many of our peers cannot grasp. People who walk in the security of God's peace all day will also lie down and sleep in the same security. Do we really believe and really act like God is as dependable as the burglar alarm you set before you go to

bed? If we are at peace with God, we should be able to trust Him to do what is best for us.

Also, peace found in God's wisdom gives confidence. *Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught (vv. 25-26)*. Life will still be fraught with the effects of sin. There will be sudden terrors, and wicked people all around us will still experience ruin and destruction. But we will not quake with fear and uncertainty. We respond differently than most of the people around us respond to trouble because wisdom teaches us how to experience the reality that God Himself is our confidence. In His wisdom, we know for certain that He is, that He loves us, and that He cares for His own – even through the valley of death.

And last in our text, we learn that wisdom results in happiness. Happy is the person who finds wisdom. *Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding (v.13)*. Of two Hebrew words translated *blessed*, this is the one that speaks of God blessing people. It really means "happy." True happiness in life is not found in material stuff, relationships with other people, popularity or human achievement. True happiness is God's gift to us who live in His wisdom.

Happy is the person who clings to wisdom. *She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed (v.18)*. It is possible to find the wisdom of God through faith in Christ and then neglect it. Not that we are no longer saved, but that we quench the Spirit of God who desires to minister God's wisdom within us. The amazing peace God gives is experienced only through a right relationship with Him, rooted in the wisdom He gives.

Professing Christians obviously claim to love and trust Jesus. But they do not spend time learning about Jesus' commands and instruction from the Bible. They do not try to understand how those commands and instructions apply to life. They do not talk to Jesus about the commands and instructions He has given to us. Therefore, when it comes time to make choices and decisions (which happens multiple times every day), they make choices by the same criteria their peers do. Their peers do not even claim to know Jesus, or do not love Jesus, or do not trust Jesus, or might even hate Jesus. The Christian who makes life's choices the same way strangers to Jesus

do should expect the same results and consequences in life – which is lack of peace.

Peace, the true, authentic, lasting peace that Jesus gives, the peace that is steadfast even in the face of turmoil, is founded in His wisdom. Ignore His wisdom and you will forfeit His peace. Grasp His wisdom, immerse yourself in His wisdom, and peace just kind of happens in your life.