

Proper 15 B RCL

Trinity, Bend

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

Ephesians 5: 15-20

John 6: 51-58

Wisdom. Don't we all want to possess wisdom? That was the case for King Solomon. When he was young, sometime between the age of 16 and 20, he ascended to the throne after his father, David's, death, Solomon went up to Gibeon to offer sacrifice and pray to God. While he is in Gibeon, we learn that God spoke to him in his dream. God asked him what he wanted.

Solomon responded that due to his age he did not know how to govern so he asked for an understanding mind to govern the people. He asked for wisdom. We know that at this point in his life he had a good relationship with God. God not only asked him what he wanted he offered him more than what he asked for, he offered him riches and a long life as well as wisdom.

Notice he did not ask for knowledge, but wisdom. For the true Hebrew person, wisdom was rooted in a right attitude toward God. There is a bit of personification of wisdom in Proverbs, where we learn that wisdom was pre-existent before creation, then active in the act of creation and ever since especially interested in humankind.

Wisdom requires that we are in relationship with God and humankind.

In Parker Palmers book, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, he says, that the heart is where wisdom resides, although wisdom needs intelligence and brings it together with feeling, intuition, sensory input, and experience.

Solomon was asking for a healed heart full of wisdom, a heart that needed to be healed of the violence that had preceded his accession to the throne.

But where does that leave us today? How do we obtain wisdom?

What does it mean for us to act with wisdom? If we're honest we would all like to say we want to act with wisdom.

But if we are to live wisely we need to be in relationship with God and each other. Jesus is unlike Solomon

When Jesus was asked what he might be given, the Gospel writers tell it, *it's a story of temptation*. It's a story about how precarious wisdom is...how precarious the animating power of perspective is.

It's like walking a candle down a long hallway and realizing that there's a breeze you didn't even feel before, but it's been there all along, and now that breeze is trying to blow out that candle.

Somehow along the way, Solomon had come to believe that he could make a hallway that wouldn't have any breeze in it. That surely wisdom would teach him how.

Jesus doesn't think that. Jesus thinks that walking the candle...bringing the light into the world...learning as you go...developing a way of knowing...*that's the wisdom*. Wisdom isn't the candle. It's the power that moves the candle out into the world, committed to keeping the flame alive. That's what wisdom is.

One of the best prayers I've heard about was offered by a 6-year-old boy. His mother told the story this way.

They were at a local swimming pool and her son was standing at the deep end, his toes curled over the edge. Still unsure of himself in the water, he stood there for what seemed to her like a very long time. Hesitating. Meditating. Palpitating.

And just when it seemed that he was going to back away from the edge, he looked up to the sky, put his hands together, and said: "O Lord, give me skills or GIVE ME GILLS!" And he jumped.

*Give me skills or give me gills.* That pretty much covers all the bases, doesn't it? O Lord, give me what I need to overcome what I'm facing; but if you won't do that, give me what I need to endure it. Give me skills or give me gills.

We all want to act wisely but sometimes we don't really know just what that means. If we don't have a plan for everything we do, sometimes God leads us into situations that are not clear about how to overcome the situation. We just need to ability to endure. That's where the gills come in, because we sometimes don't have the skills we need.

In today's Gospel Jesus continues to talk about himself as the bread of life. It is necessary to eat of this bread and drink of his blood to have eternal life. He goes on to say he will abide in those who do that. He will abide in us and we will abide in him.

I believe we all try to abide in God, but sometimes we fail. It's easy to think more of ourselves than those we are called to be in relationship with. If we spend our time caring for those less fortunate than ourselves we are walking in the way of Jesus.

But often in today's world it is so much easier to say, I want to be number one. I don't need those who need me. We are bombarded with consumerism and what it takes to make ourselves comfortable. If we just buy this product we will be more beautiful or healthier. If we live in his home we will be happier. But wisdom tells us that is not what brings happiness, that is not what keeps us in relationship with God.

If we really believe we are called to be energized by the Spirit of Wisdom we will live as Christ lived. We will live in a loving relationship with our God and each other.