

Proper 12A Track 2**Trinity, Bend**

I Kings 3:5-12

Psalm 119: 129-136

Romans 8:26-39

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

We heard in the Old Testament lesson we about Solomon who saw God in a dream. In that time of sleep or between sleep and awake, a liminal time Solomon and God have a conversation.

God said, "Ask what I should give you?"

Solomon replied, "You have made me King in the place of my Father David, but I'm too young for this, a mere child. I don't know the ropes , hardly know the 'ins' and 'outs' of this job. Here I am in the middle of the people you have chosen --- far too many people to count."

"Here's what I want: Give me a God-listening heart so I can lead your people well, discerning the difference between good and evil. For who on their own is capable of leading your glorious people?"

This is Solomon's plea for wisdom. Gene Peterson in the *Message* gives us the clear definition of Wisdom in the Old Testament. Wisdom is a God-listening heart. A God-listening heart.

That definition of wisdom is all through the old and new testament. A God-listening heart.

In Ps. 119 We said,

When your word goes forth it gives light;
It gives understanding to the simple.

Let your countenance shine upon your servant
And teach me your statutes.

Jesus follows in that tradition he tells short stories or parables that are meant for those with a God-listening heart. The parables don't have a moral.

When Jesus explains them in Matthew to the disciples in private, that is the way Matthew tells the story. Scholars tell us that isn't the way the parables were told the first time. But we all know the disciples were a little dense. They got it and then they didn't. Some had their own agenda.

Matthew himself was looking to the end of time. ^{People} ~~They~~ didn't believe the world as they knew it would last long.

Here we are over 2000 years later and the parables still apply to us.

Today we heard the kingdom of God is like yeast. During the stay home stay safe time, yeast was not available on the grocery shelves. I went to make bread one week and there was no yeast to be found.

Yeast, that simple microscopic organism is necessary for making bread. It has a lot of power. Just give it the right food and temperature and it can cause bread to rise beautifully.

If you are making bread from scratch, you have to get the yeast ready with a bit of sugar and warm water, add it to the flour and other dry ingredients along with some liquid like water or milk and whatever spice you are adding, kneed it until the dough becomes smooth then put that in a bowl, cover it ~~place it~~, place it in a warm place and let it rise. Then you punch it down again and form a loaf and let it rise again. Finally you can bake it. It is a slow process.

Stories are important. When I'm in Hawaii, they don't follow the service with "Coffee Hour" They have "Aloha Hour", which means it is a pot- luck lunch. During which there is no plan for a menu, but people have time to sit at tables and **Talk Story**.

As an example, I was serving at St. Columba's one summer, there was a small group that gathered every Sunday for worship. In the back of church was very small kitchen and some tables.

Soon after the service was ended, people brought out lunch. One Sunday, we were celebrating the Birthday of Virginia, who was 84. She was raised on the Big Island. One of the folks said, "Tell us what it was like when you were a girl."

She spoke of being raised on a plantation and her father delivering what was needed for pineapple production. She was proud to say; her family was not made up of field workers. They had it a little better than that. That is what we mean by Talk Story,

A few years ago I started a little project called *Saints I Have known*. These are ordinary people who lived their faith and made a difference in the world.

I'd like to introduce you to Basil.

He was a local boy, raised on a farm just a few miles up the road. He knew the land and the people of Harford County, Maryland. But he did not become a farmer. He became a State policeman, the type who preferred to help someone rather than write a ticket.

When this rather large guy not too tall but about 250 to 300 lbs. Got out of his car if you were driving you knew to get your license out and don't ask questions.

When I met him he was the senior warden of Holy Trinity, Churchville, MD. He was welcoming, but quiet he listened well then spoke and when he spoke people listened. A quiet person of integrity.

The first thing he proposed was that the parish buy a lawn tractor. We had 2 buildings and a cemetery on 7 acres. He came prepared. We are paying this much to have someone cut the grass, and we still have to hand cut the cemetery.

If we bought a good lawn tractor it would cost this much and pay itself off in 3 years. That became the beginning of the parish lawn teams who would show up weekly and cut the whole area and have a few beers afterward.

He was no longer a State Cop but he then worked for OSHA.(Occupational Safety and Health Administration) His specialty was all workplace complaints. Often it was women in offices who felt they were being harassed or treated unfairly. Sometimes it was workers digging to put in new pipelines who were expected to get down in a deep hole with no sidewalls in place. He would listen to both sides, research the case and then make a decision. Wisdom was the way he operated.

This ordinary guy had 3 kids, when his youngest daughter, Sally, became pregnant during her first year of college, after a conversation with Sally, Basil went to talk with the father of this child.

Basil and his wife, Betty, said to Sally, "You can move home and have this child, but you have to pay your own medical insurance." Sally got a job as a nanny for a young family, where the Mom of 2 little children was dying of cancer.

When Alex ,Sally's baby, was born there was a big baptismal party. So large that we needed to have an extra service that Sunday. When all the family and friends showed up the church building was just too small for the regular Sunday people and the visitors.

Basil was smart, if there was a large parish event he was one of the people you saw when you walked out the door. He was in the kitchen with his sleeves rolled up washing dishes. It was a hot by hand job, but we knew he could make dishwashing fun.

If there was a disagreement in the parish Basil would quietly listen and talk with a few folks before taking a stand. His opinion held a lot of weight with the pillars of the parish, as well as those who recently joined.

When Basil was old, and fully retired his Grandson, Alex, The little boy who came to church every Sunday with his Mom and grandparents, moved back to care for his grandparents. He was the one who drove Basil to a local pub, where the old guys from the church would gather weekly to share stories.

have a lunch

The reason I shared this story, is that Basil knew what the Kingdom of God was all about. He didn't talk religion. He lived it. An ordinary guy, just quietly doing his job, treating people fairly, a man of integrity who was found in church every Sunday Morning. A man with a God-listening heart.

That's what Jesus expects of us. Just be yourself. Some folks think Wisdom comes with age, I'm not too sure about that. Solomon was pretty young when he asked for Wisdom, sure he grew in Wisdom and grace.

Share your story, some of it you will like and some you may want to reject. Look at where God's hand was present and where you may have rejected it. Your story helped you become who you are. You are a beloved Child of God, made by God, or as St. Paul would say, adopted by God.

As a member of the kingdom of God Joy is yours to celebrate.

Just one more short story.

St. Francis and Brother Leo were having a conversation one day, when the topic of joy came up. True joy, Francis said, would not consist in having all the theologians, church authorities, or kings enter the Franciscan order; or converting all the unbelievers; or of doing a lot of miracles.

Rather it would consist in coming back to the friary on a winter night, muddy and freezing cold; being repeatedly refused admission by the brother who answered the door; being called a simpleton and told to go away and not come back; and yet remaining patient and not getting upset. That would be true joy.

It is the story of Jesus Christ, who knew peace and joy because he often was in conversation with God. The same God who calls is to follow him.

The one who reminds us to be patient and one who calls us to Wisdom through listening and conversation with God and the people of God. The one who calls us to have a God-listening heart. The one who enables us to live in the world as we know it today.