

The Source of Our Wisdom

The Apostle Paul has been talking a lot about wisdom in his letter. He says that there are two kinds: the wisdom of the world, and the wisdom of the cross. The challenge sometimes is to be able to tell them apart.

I thought it might be fun to begin this morning with a quiz. I'll read a series of statements, and after each one I'll invite you to raise your hand if you think it describes either A) the wisdom of the world; or B) the wisdom of God.

1. *There is wisdom that is cheered by the crowds.* Would this be wisdom of the world, or wisdom of God? Raise your hand if you think this is wisdom of the world?
Wisdom of the cross?
2. *There is wisdom that looks like abject failure.*
3. *There is wisdom that earns lots of money.*
4. *There is wisdom based on weakness.*
5. *There is wisdom that comes from humility.*
6. *There is wisdom that leads only to death.*
7. *There is wisdom that lasts for centuries.*
8. *There is wisdom that wears a crown of gold.*
9. *There is wisdom you go to church for.*
10. *There is wisdom that sounds like gibberish.*

How do we acquire the wisdom of God? Where do we turn to? Do we get it from books? From college? How about seminary? Do we get it from trusted friends? How about from our minister?

How about none of the above? According to Paul, there is only one place we can go to receive the wisdom of God, only one place to turn to. And that is . . . drum roll . . . the Holy Spirit.

Paul says that each of us has a spirit inside of us, deep within. And he calls it the "human spirit." [*For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? 2:11*] He says that this is the part of us that knows ourselves, that understands ourselves. My human spirit knows me. Yours knows you.

In the same way, only God's own Spirit knows God. Knows what belongs to God. Knows the wisdom of God, the mind of God. That makes sense, right? How could we ever hope or presume to know the mind of God?

But here's the amazing thing. God has given us access to his own mind. Here's how Paul puts it: "*What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him*"—Paul is actually quoting Isaiah here, specifically Isaiah 64:4. And then Paul states that "*these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.*" This is a quote from the prophet Isaiah, specifically 64:4. And then Paul adds, "*for the Spirit [that is, the Holy Spirit] searches everything, even the depths of God.*" What both Isaiah and Paul are saying is that we have access even to the very depths of God! It's stunning, isn't it? We're so used to thinking about God as far above us and beyond us. As incomprehensible. And in some ways this is so. But the mind of God, the depths of God, God himself makes available to us.

In other words, we have access to the Wisdom of God. He makes it available to us as a gift. We won't find it within our own spirits. We won't find it in a book. We can read about it, of course. We can read about God's Wisdom, about God's Spirit. But that's not the same as knowing it.

We won't find God's Wisdom in church, although that's a good place to start. We won't even find it in Scripture, although that's about as close as we can get, on our own.

To find God's Wisdom we have to look beyond ourselves, beyond our books, beyond our friends—even the smartest and “wisest” ones we know—beyond our church; beyond our committee meetings (even Ministries Council); even beyond Scripture (or at least beyond the words on each page). To find God's Wisdom we have to go directly to God's Spirit. And even then, we won't find it on our own. Because the Holy Spirit, Paul says, is a gift from God. We have to ask for it. And of course, we have to receive it, when it is offered.

Paul says, “*Now we have received not the spirit of the world* [notice that the NRSV makes this a small “s”], *but the Spirit that is from God* [which the NRSV makes a capital S], *so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.*” Gifts, you'll notice, is plural. Because God's Holy Spirit offers us more than just one gift. Paul will come back to that later in his letter. He'll say in chapter 12 that there are “many gifts.” And he'll tell us what some of them are.

For now he's talking about one very special gift, namely the gift of God's Wisdom. God's own mind, deep within. Which, by the way, Paul also calls “the mind of Christ,” as if they are one and the same. Paul exclaims, “*For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him.*” *But we have the mind of Christ.*”

I think—and obviously this is my own wisdom, not God's—that what Paul is really saying is we do have access to the mind of God, to the mind of Christ. But we still have to ask for it. It's not enough to look for it. We have to ask for it. Because God's Wisdom, like the Holy Spirit that brings it to us, is a *gift*. Let's make that a capital God, shall we? [*Gift*]

Do you want to understand the Bible? Ask God's Spirit to help you. Do you want to know how to pray about something or someone? Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the words. Do you want to be able to see what God is up to in the world? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it to you. Do you want to see people the way God's sees them? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

The Holy Spirit, freely given, is our source for the Wisdom of God.

Please pray with me. God, give us your wisdom. For our wisdom isn't enough. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that we might think like you. Help us to fully receive it. Amen.