

Cultivating Wisdom

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Preacher: Bryan Hart

[0 : 00] What's up, Went Harbor? My name's Doug, one of the pastors here. And however you find yourself watching this today, maybe with a group of friends or some family, whatever the scenario is, chances are you either just demanded everybody to sit down or you were just voluntold to come and sit down and join the crowd.

This is not a time that we want to take lightly. This is a time that we get to realign our hearts. It's not a preview at a theater or a trailer. It's not time to go refreshing your popcorn, but actually realign our hearts with the King of Kings and Lord of Lord.

Jesus, he has set his affections upon us. John 15, 9 says, As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now abide in my love.

That is such an amazing scripture, guys, that Jesus loves us with the same intensity as the Father loves him. Let's respond out of that today.

We actually respond, the Bible says, because he first loved us. So the only proper way to respond is to love him back. So let's do that this morning. Father, you are worthy of all praise and all glory and all honor.

[1 : 10] We are so undeserving for your love and affections that you've shown to us. Holy Spirit, help us respond in a way that glorifies Jesus today.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And our God is the lion, the lion of Judah.

He's roaring in power and fighting our battles And every knee will bow before Him Our God is a lamb, the lamb that was slain For the sins of the world, His blood breaks the chains Every knee will bow before the lion and the lamb Every knee will bow before Him Every knee will bow So open up the gates, make way before the King of kings The God who comes to save is here to set the captives free And who can stop the Lord Almighty

Our God is the lion, the lion of Judah He's roaring with power and fighting our battles And every knee will bow before Him And our God is a lamb, the lamb that was slain For the sins of the world, His blood breaks the chains Every knee will bow before the lion and the lamb And every knee will bow before Him Who can stop the Lord Almighty Who can stop the Lord Who can stop the Lord Almighty Who can stop the Lord Almighty Who can stop the Lord Who can stop Him And who can stop the Lord Almighty Who can stop the Lord And our God is the Lion, the Lion of Judah.

[4 : 24] He's roaring with power and fighting our battles. And every knee will bow before Him. And our God is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain.

For the sins of the world, His blood breaks the chains. Every knee will bow before the Lion and the Lamb.

Every knee will bow before Him. Every knee, every knee will bow. Every knee will bow before Him. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation.

Praise to the Lord, the Lamb that was slain. Oh, my soul, praise Him for He is the health and salvation. All ye who hear now to His temple drawn near.

[6 : 07] Praise Him in glad adoration. Praise to the Lord, who are helping so wondrously reigneth. Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth. Think to the Lord, who are helping so prosper.

Surely His goodness and mercy will daily attend Thee.

Ponder anew what the Almighty can do. If with His love He befriend Thee.

Oh. Oh. Oh.

[7 : 47] Praise to the Lord. Oh let all that is in Thee adore Him.

All that hath life and breath come now with praises before Him Let the amen sound from His people again Let the amen sound from His people again Let the amen sound from His people again Gladly forever adorn Him Oh, oh, oh, oh God, we just adore You this morning.

We just give You all of our praise and adoration. We just want to worship You and thank You and praise You for all the good You've done and passed in the present right now in this moment as You minister to our hearts and meet us in worship.

We thank You for who You are and we praise You with all that we have. In Jesus' name, amen. Good morning, One Harbor. My name is Emily Recker. I'm a wife to Brian, a mom to four at the Beaufort site.

This morning, I have the privilege of leading us in prayer as a church, and I'm excited for us to be praying into the family unit this morning. First, please join me in praying for the strengthening and healing of family units inside our church and our community.

[10:01] Over the past few months, relationships have been strained given the circumstances, so let's pray for relationships between spouses, between parents and children, and even between siblings.

We'd love to see healing and strengthening for those. Next, let's pray that the lonely would be put into families in our community. Psalm 68, 5, and 6 said that God is a father to the fatherless. He's a defender of widows. He is in His holy dwelling, and He sets the lonely into families, and we want to see that lived out in our church family. So let's specifically pray for singles and widows and anyone else who may feel on the outskirts to feel like they are welcome in our community and that they're safe and they're cherished and loved and that they have value.

Finally, my husband and I have been foster parents in our community for the past six years. We recently sat down with our social worker in our home, and she was telling us how great the need is for more licensed foster homes in our community.

We currently have 500 families around there in our One Harbor Church family. So I think it would be so cool if we saw more families step up and become licensed foster homes.

[11:09] There's 15 that I know of currently between all the One Harbor sites, and as of six years ago, guys, we had zero. So the fact that we have this many is amazing, but I would love to see that number grow by five families, especially during a time when our community is going to be needing us to step up and care for the fatherless more than ever.

If they need more foster homes in our county, why not put them into Jesus-loving, gospel-centered homes where they're going to see what gospel community looks like and Jesus' love looks like in a practical way every day.

So let's pray into those areas this morning over the next five minutes. Let's pray.

Let's pray.

Let's pray.

[13:15] Let's pray.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[15:45] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[19:15] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So, thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[23:41] This is a good thing.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And I think you're a good thing.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. difference between good and evil. And something to bear in mind is that in Hebrew, the word knowledge there is more than just info. It suggests

intimacy, the way the Bible sometimes says a man knows his wife. It suggests coming alongside and participating with. And so it's saying that when you eat of that tree, you don't just know the difference between good and evil, you participate with them both. See, once you eat of that tree, you won't just know how to bless people and help them when they're hurting. You'll know how to manipulate them and exploit their weaknesses.

You'll know how to do harm to get your way. You'll know how to cut corners to be more expedient. So the point is there are two trees in that story. And Adam and Eve are really just given two commands.

They're told to take dominion of the world, of the earth, of this garden that they've been put in to to enjoy everything. And then the other command is just don't eat of that tree. And that's what the voice of God tells them. Well, soon there is another voice. The serpent comes and tempts Adam and Eve.

[26 : 00] And so now the question is whose voice are they going to listen to? Which tree are they going to eat from? And they choose folly. They listen to the serpent and they do what is right in their own eyes.

They make themselves the judge. There's these two voices and they make themselves the judge between which voice they want to listen to. And so really you could say that human history, this is the beginning of a story that keeps playing itself out in human history where human beings seek wisdom on their own terms. And I think we've got a lot of reason to believe that that story was of real importance to Solomon. We read last week about how Solomon asked God famously, asked God for wisdom.

And so we're going to just look at again one of the things he asks in 1 Kings 3 9 when he's becoming king. He's praying to the Lord and he says, give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people that I may discern between good and evil for who is able to govern this, your great people. That might sound a little familiar there where he asks to be able to discern between good and evil. That's reminiscent of the trees. He doesn't want to make the wrong decision. And our translation, the ESV says that he asks for an understanding mind, but other translations say that he asks for an understanding heart. Some people say the most literal way of translating this would be that Solomon asks for a hearing heart. He wants a heart that hears the right voice. He wants to obey the Lord.

And so he starts off by asking God to help him do what Adam and Eve did not. He wants to hear from God to choose rightly, to choose from the right tree, so to speak. And he has this story in mind in these speeches that he writes to his son. Solomon has lady wisdom say this in Proverbs chapter 1, because they fools hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof. Therefore, they shall eat the fruit of their way and have their fill of their own devices. So again, there you have a reference back to Adam and Eve eating the fruit of their way. And that way leads to destruction. But then in chapter 3, he says in verse 13, blessed is the one who finds wisdom and the one who gets understanding. And then in verse 18, he says that she, wisdom, is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. Those who hold her fast are called blessed.

You know, the tree of life is only found three places in the Bible. It's in Genesis, in the Garden of Eden. And then it's in Revelation, where John has a vision of the new heavens and new earth, and the tree of life will be there, and we will get to eat of it. The only other place that it comes up is here in Proverbs.

[28 : 43] And it's actually referenced four different times in Proverbs, because Solomon is reminding the reader again and again to be careful and to choose the right tree, choose the tree of life. There's a movie that came out a few months ago called 1917. It's a World War I movie, and it's about these two soldiers.

And in the film, trees play a fairly symbolic role. The opening scene is under a tree. The closing scene is under a tree. And there's a few other places where trees factor into the story. But there's one line where one of the soldiers says to the other, keep your eyes on the trees. And I can just imagine Solomon saying that to his son. Pay attention. Keep your eyes on the trees. There are going to be choices in front of you. You need to choose wisely. Adam was put on the earth to rule and reign, but he chose the wrong tree. You, my son, will one day rule and reign. Choose the tree of life. Keep your eyes on the trees. Now, I think this can create some pressure for us today, because when we read this kind of thing, there's just a sense of like, well, what if we get it wrong? Like, how

will we know? How will we know what the right thing is? In fact, there are some people who have real anxiety around making decisions because they're so afraid they're going to make the wrong choice or the wrong decision. And I think that Solomon's guidance to his son in Proverbs addresses that anxiety in two different ways, because wisdom is a coin that has two different sides, at least the way that Solomon seems to write about it. In the one sense, I think Solomon would say wisdom is not always complicated. Wisdom is living with the grain of life, not against it. Remember from last week, much of the book of Proverbs is very, very, well, they aren't promises. They are principles. So Proverbs gives you principles to live by, and they're very practical. God made the universe a certain way. So when you live according to the design with the principles that he had in mind, generally things work out best. Over the following weeks, we're going to look at some of those practical ways that Proverbs addresses, like how we use our words and relationships with others and all kinds of things. But you don't have to be a genius to figure a lot of this stuff out. There's a good example of what I mean by this in these initial speeches that Solomon gives his son. In chapter 6, he says, You can just imagine a father saying this to his teenage son on a Saturday morning. How long are you going to lay in bed? Wake up. Get out of bed. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber and want like an armed man. This is like a classic dad talk happening here from a father to his teenage son. Do you want to avoid unnecessary poverty? Well, it's not complicated. The ants have it figured out. Get out of bed and work hard. That's wisdom. And that calls the mind that in Hebrew, wisdom is a very rich word. And it suggests different kinds of things that we might use different words for. I mean, wisdom can be used to describe street smarts, just the basic kind of common sense that gets you through life. Also, in the Old Testament, we see that there are times where people have a real skill for a specific trade. And the Bible says that they have wisdom. So the wise person isn't merely the philosopher. It's the person who knows how to function as a responsible adult. It's the person who gets up in the morning and does their job with excellence like the ant. And so this idea, this kind of wisdom also goes back to the Garden of Eden. And Solomon also has that part of the story in mind. When God, when God created Adam and Eve, he said that they were made in his image, which is this really rich idea.

But one of the things that that means is that Adam and Eve were meant to be God's representatives in creation. But the only thing that God had thus far demonstrated to them was that he was this creator and arranger of the universe. He was a cultivator of the world. And so Adam and Eve are therefore called to bear his image by being cultivators in the garden. I mean, the creation story is really wonderful.

[33 : 28] It's, I mean, God just kind of creating things and putting the sky up here and the land down here. And that's good. And that's good. And the fish go in the sea. And that's good. He's just architecting everything. And he tells Adam and Eve that they are to do the same in the garden. In fact, there's one part of the story where God brings the animals to Adam just to see what he would name them because there's a kind of wisdom at play there. Solomon, again, he's got this story in mind when he describes wisdom in chapter 8, personifying Lady Wisdom. He says, when he, God, established the heavens, high wisdom 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. So God uses wisdom to make the world. And then he turns around to Adam and Eve and says, you go and be cultivators as well and use wisdom. And so everything in life is not a crisis decision. That's a part of this. It's a series of smaller decisions where we live with the grain of God's good world. And so there are questions like, will we grow in skillfulness or will we be sloppy? Will we cultivate the world around us or will we destroy it? Will we work hard today or will we be lazy? Will we maintain healthy relationships or will we treat others badly?

Wisdom, it includes things like, you know, being a wise philosopher, but it's so much more than that. It has to do with just the skills needed to get through life. And it's also very concerned with morals and ethics. In other words, you can be very good at your job, but if you use your skill to take advantage of other people, that is actually not wisdom. The wise live with the grain of the world as God made it. They know how to function and to bring care and concern to everything they do. So

that's, that's how we represent God is his image bearers. But, but Solomon tells his son, if you don't do that, you are going to suffer the consequences. Proverbs 1, Lady Wisdom says, because I have called and you refuse to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one is heeded. Because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock you.

when terror strikes you. Now that sounds vindictive. And I think the point to remember here is that Solomon is giving a kind of warning, maybe a little bit different than some of the warnings we see in other types of literature in the Bible. One modern writer says this, wisdom's teaching is very similar to that of the Torah and the prophets, though it argues its points on a different basis. Instead of saying, listen, because I say so, like Moses, or listen, or God will intervene in judgment, like a prophet.

[36 : 40] Miss wisdom says, listen, or you'll find your life ends up in a mess as a natural result of the choices you're making. And don't think that I shall be weeping when it does. I shall be thinking that it's just what you deserved. As my mother used to say, don't come crying to me when it happens.

And so, again, that's one side of the coin here. A lot of wisdom is just having common sense. But that is not all wisdom is, and common sense on its own is not enough. Solomon also kind of addresses this need for wisdom from another perspective. He says that wisdom comes to those who search for it because they know they don't have it. And that means that we have to be humble. Now, I think the part of wisdom here that's all about common sense is fairly easy to grasp. I think this side of things is hard for us because we don't even, we probably don't even fully realize how much the culture has influenced us with statements like this. You need to just listen to your heart. You need to look inside.

The truth is inside you, and you need to go with your gut. You need to go with your instincts. Now, to be sure, there's a place for gut feelings. There's a place for instinct. But Solomon would say, you should be very careful with those things. He says in chapter 3, trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

Again, that requires real humility. You have to know that you are not wise. You have to know that you don't have wisdom if you're going to actually go and look for it. In chapter 2, he's again addressing his son. He says, my son, if you receive my words and treasure my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding. Yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding. Remember, just previously, Solomon had said that lady wisdom is calling out to you. You need to call back. You need to answer her voice. You need to shout out to her. If you seek wisdom like silver and search for it, it's for hidden treasures, as if your life depended on it, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

And he says, for the Lord gives wisdom from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. The Lord gives it. It's not just inside you. You have to go and ask for it. There is, at the end of the book of Proverbs, there is a series of Proverbs by a man named Agur. And I want you to hear how he introduces himself at the beginning of these Proverbs. Chapter 30, verse 1 says, the words of Agur, the son of Jekyll, the oracle. The man declares, I am weary, O God. I am weary, O God, and worn out.

[39 : 37] Surely, I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One. Now, if I was going to write Proverbs that were going to be in a part of the Bible called wisdom that I wanted you to listen to, I would probably introduce myself a little differently. I would not start by saying, I am too stupid to be a man. But the point here is that Agur knows that he is actually not any different than Adam. He knows that on his own, he will always make the wrong choice. That is humility. And that's where you have to start.

That's where Agur starts. Proverbs chapter 4, verse 7, Solomon says, the beginning of wisdom is this, get wisdom. It's as if to say, the starting point is to realize you don't have it. You have to go find it.

It is wisdom to know that if God does not help you like Adam, you will choose the wrong tree. And so those are the two different ways I think we can think about wisdom, like two sides to a coin.

On the one hand, being wise is not always complicated. It's common sense, doing the right thing every day, using wisdom to cultivate the world around us. God made you in his image like Adam to be a blessing, to wisely live in the world with skill and care. If ants can demonstrate a kind of wisdom, so can you. But on the other hand, wisdom is also beyond us. It's not something that we just have on our own. God has it and we have to ask for it, search for it, call out for it, and listen to the voice of wisdom when it comes to us. And you may feel like Solomon is talking out of both sides of his mouth. And I think we're meant to feel some of that tension between these two different ways of thinking about wisdom. But that tension also makes the revelation of Jesus Christ all the more remarkable because in the New Testament, Jesus is presented as both the fulfillment of Adam and Lady Wisdom.

He fulfills both of them, which is to say that Jesus is both a practitioner of wisdom and its source. So in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul writes that Jesus is the wisdom of God. So he is truly the personification of wisdom. John at the beginning of his gospel says that Jesus was with God in the beginning. When God was architecting the world with wisdom, he was doing it with Jesus. All wisdom comes from him. But he does not merely supply it. He showed up to do with wisdom what Adam should have done at the very beginning. And this is something that I think maybe often gets overlooked that is I think pretty spectacular. I think a lot of people wonder why Jesus waited so long to die on the cross.

[42 : 20] You know, it seems like a lot of life to live. He didn't start his ministry until he was roughly 30 years old. So what's with all the time? And we don't have a lot of details of those first years of his life, but we know what we need to. Those years were very important because Jesus was born into a family.

He was a carpenter's son. The creation myths of most other pagan religions of that day said that the world was created by violence, which is why rulers like Julius Caesar were considered to be the sons of the gods or the gods themselves because they were doing what the gods had always been doing, conquering.

But in Genesis, God does not appear like a conqueror. Remember, the creation story in Genesis is just really the story of a gardener, someone just putting things in their place. And then God tells Adam to be like him. And so when Jesus shows up, it's significant that he is not born into a family of conquerors.

He's born into a family of carpenters. And I think it's a bit poetic that he's born into a family that works with wood, turning it into beautiful things, wood from trees, cultivating the world around him. That is wisdom. Jesus is showing us from the very beginning just how we're meant to live in a very everyday sense, submitted to God, representing him in the way that we live our lives. And then in a moment, he turns the world upside down and he challenges everything that we think we know to include what we think we know about wisdom. The worst thing ever done with a tree was when wood was fashioned into a cross on which our Lord was executed. And yet now we know that what seemed like folly turned out to be wise. Again, 1 Corinthians 1 says that the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to those of us who are being saved, it's the power of God. It's the wisdom of God. And so for 2,000 years, Christians have been proclaiming a message of eternal life with the symbol of a cross, which is the tree of death. But because of that tree, we are granted access into the new heavens and new earth where the apostle John says, we too will eat of the tree of life. So Jesus, who is wisdom in the flesh, chose to die on the cross for the foolish ones who sent him there. There's a lot of themes kind of coming together here. And I think I've always loved the way George Herbert said this in a poem of his that I've always loved, talking about the crucifixion and Jesus on the cross.

[44 : 49] It says, The grief of Jesus means life for us. And he tells us that we must also carry our cross because that's how the tree of life often looks. It looks like foolishness. Sometimes it looks foolish to do the noble thing when you could have done the expedient thing. It looks foolish to cultivate slowly when you could have cut corners and got ahead faster. It looks foolish to die to yourself when you could have exalted yourself. Gut instincts can help you, but they will not help you get it right all the time.

We will always, at some point, we will choose wrongly. But because of Jesus, we have access to the Holy Spirit. I don't know if you remember at the beginning of this sermon quoted from Proverbs chapter 123 where Lady Wisdom says, Turn up my reproof and I'll pour out my spirit. Well, that's what Jesus does. He says, Turn to me and I will pour out my Holy Spirit, which he did and still does.

