

Ephesians 5:15-20

Paul encourages the Ephesian Christians to live wisely and in the power of God's Spirit that fills them, and to encourage one another through songs and through worship and thanksgiving to God.

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 6:51-58

Jesus continues proclaiming that he is the Bread of Life, inviting the people to eat his flesh and drink his blood as true food and drink. Those who do this will live, he promises, unlike those who died even after eating the bread in the wilderness.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

READINGS 52B

The key word this week is wisdom. Solomon is praised by God for seeking wisdom above all things. In the Psalms, God's work on behalf of God's people is praised, and wisdom is offered to those who fear the Lord, and life to those who follow God's commands. In Paul's letter, the Ephesians are encouraged to live wisely by being filled with God's Spirit as they sing to one another and to God in songs of praise and as they give thanks in all things. In the Gospel, Jesus says those who seek life find it by eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood. This shocking image speaks of absolute union with God, taking the very essence of Christ into our beings, and it results in life, the same life that comes from living wisely. Wisdom is found, then, through union with Christ and through living in the power of Christ's Spirit that fills us as we "ingest" the Christ-nature. Through Christ's Table we are invited into this mystical union with God.

Global Application

It can feel like wisdom is in short supply in our world today, but we need creative, surprising and courageous wisdom if we are to navigate the difficult times in which we find ourselves. The challenge is that we so often choose expediency and self-interest over wisdom. Corporate leaders are measured every quarter not because this is the way to ensure the best solutions for sustainability and corporate social responsibility, but because share-holders want to be sure that their investments are growing. Political parties oppose each other on principle not because they really believe in their positions and ideals (as evidenced by how easily they change position when it becomes expedient to do so) but for political gain and one-upmanship. Even religious communities fall prey to holding on to self-interested beliefs and practices for their own survival's sake, rather than embracing what is best for the whole planet and its peoples. What we require is courageous and bold people who are willing to commit to the wisdom of justice, peace, compassion, sustainability, and sharing through the long term; who are strong enough to stay the course and do the work necessary to bring about the needed changes in our systems and structures. If we want leaders like this, then we must lay aside our own personal agendas, and begin voting for and supporting those who lead like this. When we send strong signals that we will not stand for short-term gains over long-term wisdom, we won't support partisan point-scoring over the common good, and we won't be part of ideologies that favour some over all, our stand for wisdom will inevitably shift our leaders and our world into wiser ways of being. *(John van de Laar)*

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

David dies and Solomon takes over as king. Then God allows him to ask for anything he wants, and he requests wisdom to rule over God's people well. God is pleased with his request and grants him wisdom, but also promises him wealth and fame and, if he stays faithful to God, long life.

Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. 11The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established. He loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

Psalms 111

A Psalm in praise of God's works which are glorious, righteous, just, merciful, compassionate and trustworthy. God has redeemed God's people and established an everlasting covenant with them, and wisdom is found in the fear of God and in keeping God's laws.

Praise the Lord!

**I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright, in the congregation.**

Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

**Full of honour and majesty is God's work,
and God's righteousness endures forever.**

God has gained renown by God's wonderful deeds;

the Lord is gracious and merciful.

God provides food for those who fear God;

God is ever mindful of God's covenant.

God has shown his people the power of God's works,
in giving them the heritage of the nations.

The works of God's hands are faithful and just;

all God's precepts are trustworthy.

They are established forever and ever,

to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

God sent redemption to his people;

God has commanded God's covenant forever.

Holy and awesome is God's name.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;

all those who practice it have a good understanding.

God's praise endures forever.