

S-E-P

FOR ALL WHO MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT THIS MESSAGE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABOUT SOUTHEAST POLK IN SOME WAY, THE MESSAGE IS NOT! **THOSE LETTERS STAND FOR THE SOLOMON, EPHESIANS, AND PSALM.** WHY YOU ASK? BECAUSE BETWEEN THESE MEN AND THE WRITINGS TODAY WE CAN GAIN A PICTURE OF WHAT MAKES UP A LIFE LIVED WISELY. ONE THING IS CLEAR, WE MAY POSSESS WISDOM, BUT WE STILL DO SOME FOOLISH THINGS. SOLOMON AND DAVID ARE EXAMPLES OF SUCH BEHAVIOR, DESPITE THEIR WISDOM.

REMEMBER KNOWLEDGE IS NOT WISDOM. KNOWLEDGE COMES FROM READING BOOKS OR TRIAL AND ERROR. WISDOM IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT. HERE IS STORY THAT ILLUSTRATES THE DIFFERENCE....

A young minister was asked by a funeral director to hold a grave-side service for a homeless man, with no family or friends, who had died while traveling through the area. The funeral was to be held at a cemetery way back in the country, and this man would be the first to be laid to rest there. The young minister was not familiar with the backwoods area, he became lost; and being a typical man did not stop for directions. He finally arrived an hour late, saw the backhoe and the crew, who were eating lunch, but the hearse was nowhere in sight. He apologized to the workers for his tardiness, and stepped to the side of the open grave, where he saw the vault lid already in place. He assured the workers he would not hold them long, but this was the proper thing to do. The workers gathered around, still eating their lunch! He poured out his heart and soul. As he preached the workers began to say "Amen," "Praise the Lord," and "Glory." He closed the lengthy service with a prayer and walked to his car. He felt he had done his duty for the homeless man and that the crew would leave with a renewed sense of purpose and dedication, in spite of his tardiness. As he was opening the door of his car, he overheard one of the workers saying to another, "I ain't never seen anything like this before, and I've been putting in septic tanks for over twenty years." FOR SURE A WISE MAN WOULD HAVE ASKED FOR DIRECTIONS!!!!

WISDOM IS THE SOUNDNESS OF AN ACTION OR DECISION WITH REGARD TO THE USE OF EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE, AND GOOD JUDGMENT. IN ADDITION TO THIS DEFINITION THE BIBLE TELLS US IN PROVERBS THAT "The fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge..." WHERE "FEAR" IS, MEANS THE *RESPECT OR AWE OF GOD*. JAMES ASKS THE QUESTION "Who among you is wise and understanding?" HE GOES ON TO TALK ABOUT TRUE WISDOM FROM ABOVE AND ITS QUALITIES.

THERE ARE, IN TODAY'S READINGS, INSTRUCTIONS THAT POINTS US IN THE DIRECTION OF LEADING OUR LIVES WISELY. WE CERTAINLY DO NOT WANT TO BE KNOWN AS A FOOL!!! MANY PROVERBS, EVEN SECULAR ONES, WARN US OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING FOOLISH.

IT IS AMAZING THAT THE VERY FIRST THING MENTIONED ABOUT A LIFE OF "WALKING IN WISDOM" IS **TO MAKE THE MOST OF OUR TIME!!** WE FOOL OURSELVES MANY TIMES IN THINKING WE HAVE MORE TIME FOR THIS OR THAT – WE DON'T KNOW!!!

PSALM 90 *“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”* SCORE WAS AN OLD MEASURE OF 20. REGARDLESS OF THE EXACT TIME WE HAVE HERE ON EARTH, IT GOES BY QUICKLY AND WE MUST BE GOOD “TIMEKEEPERS”.

A QUESTION PUT TO PEOPLE WHO SEEMS TO ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH IS “*HOW DO YOU DO IT?*” THE ANSWER IS THEY USE THEIR TIME WISELY; AFTER ALL WE ALL HAVE THE SAME TWENTY-FOUR HOURS IN A DAY. **IT IS HOW WE USE THAT TIME THAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE.** HOW MUCH TIME DO WE SPEND IN FRONT OF THE TV? FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND PLAYING VIDEO GAMES OR TEXTING? ASK YOURSELF YOUNG OR OLD WHAT COULD I BE DOING WITH THAT TIME THAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

THE “*WISDOM OF OUR CULTURE*” TELLS US TO MAKE TIME FOR “ME”. YES, WE NEED AT TIMES TO WIND DOWN, BUT HOW LONG AND HOW OFTEN? IN TALKING TO PEOPLE MANY ORGANIZATIONS ARE LACKING MEMBERS BECAUSE YOUNGER GENERATIONS JUST DON’T SEEM TO SOCIALIZE OR IF THEY DO VOLUNTEER THE COMPANY PAYS FOR IT! OH WE SAY WE HAVE NUMBERS OF “FRIENDS” ON SOCIAL MEDIA, BUT WHERE IS THE CONTACT FACE-TO-FACE?

OUR MISSION STATEMENT IN PART SAYS *“Make Christ Known In Our Community And Around The World”.* HOW ARE WE USING OUR TIME TO MAKE THAT POSSIBLE? DO WE FIGURE THAT AN HOUR PLUS IN CHURCH ON SUNDAY FULFILLS SOME “REQUIREMENT”? GOD HAS BLESSED US IN MANY WAYS, **BUT IF WE JUST LIVE LIFE FOR “ME” THEN WE ARE LIVING NO DIFFERENT THAN THE CULTURE. HOW DO WE THEN “MAKE A DIFFERENCE” IF PEOPLE SEE NO DIFFERENCE IN OUR BEHAVIORS OR WE GIVE THEM NO HOPE?** I REALIZED OR MAYBE LET SAY I BECAME AWARE THAT SO MANY IN THE BIBLE, OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS DID NOT LIVE FOR THEMSELVES, BUT FOR OTHERS. THE TIME THEY HAD ON EARTH WAS SPENT WISELY AND OTHERS BENEFITED AS DID THOSE WHO LIVED, LOVED AND LEAD OTHERS.

TIME SPENT WISELY LEADS TO THE SECOND ELEMENT OF “WALKING IN WISDOM” – **UNDERSTANDING THE WILL OF GOD FOR YOUR LIFE.** AND YOU MIGHT ASK “HOW IN THE WORLD DO I FIND THAT OUT?” JAMES 1:5 *“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.”* LOOK AT SOLOMON, YOUNG AND IN EXPERIENCED, ASKING GOD FOR WISDOM TO RULE HIS PEOPLE. GOD GAVE HIM WISDOM AND SO MUCH MORE!

IF WE ARE USING OUR TIME WISELY THEN SOME OF THAT TIME MUST BE SPENT IN THE BIBLE, PRAYING, AND LISTENING, AND WITH THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WE WILL KNOW HIS WILL FOR US. A PERSONAL NOTE, I SENSED EARLY IN MY LIFE THAT GOD WAS CALLING ME, BUT UNWISELY I DID NOT LISTEN, AND ALTHOUGH I HAD A MEANINGFUL CAREER IN WEATHER,

GOD IN HIS LOVE AND PATIENCE CALLED ME AGAIN. THIS TIME I LISTENED AND HERE I AM STANDING BEFORE YOU THIS MORNING. YES, GOD GAVE ME SOMETHING GOOD, MY WEATHER CAREER, BUT HE SAVED THE BEST FOR LAST – MINISTRY!

I AM A FIRM BELIEVER THAT **GOD CALLS TO OUR SPIRIT, AND PLACES IN OUR HEARTS WHAT TO DO IN LIFE**. AGAIN WE HAVE TO USE OUR TIME WISELY AND LISTEN FOR OUR TRUE CALLING, BECAUSE IF WE DON'T THERE WILL ALWAYS BE THIS DESIRE FOR SOMETHING MORE, THAT YOU ARE MISSING "SOMETHING". BEING A CHILD OF GOD WE DON'T HAVE TO SETTLE FOR GOOD, GOD'S DESIRE IS THE BEST FOR US!!

IMPORTANT TO KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD FOR OUR LIVES IS TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT. JESUS PROMISED HE WOULD SEND THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE COMFORTER, GUIDE, AND TEACHER. IF WE ARE "*WALKING IN WISDOM*" THEN WE ARE NOT INFLUENCED BY THAT WHICH IS NOT BENEFICIAL FOR US. **HOW "FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT" WE ARE DEPENDS ON OUR WILLINGNESS TO YIELD TO GOD**. WE ARE, AS THE READINGS POINTED OUT LAST WEEK, IN THE NEW LIFE **PUTTING AWAY THE THINGS OF THE OLD LIFE**. IF EACH AND EVERY DAY WE ASK GOD TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT WE WILL WALK BY THE SPIRIT POSSESSING THOSE FRUITS OF THE FAITH THAT WILL LET US ALSO "*WALK IN WISDOM*".

NOW WHEN WE "*WALK IN WISDOM*" **THERE WILL BE THAT ATTITUDE THAT WE FREELY GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR WHO HE IS, AND WHAT HE WAS DONE FOR US**. IN VERSES 2, 3, 4, AND 5 OF PSALM 111, THE PSALMIST TODAY PRAISES GOD FOR THESE VERY THINGS. THAT WISDOM SHOULD BE REFLECTED THROUGH US TO OTHERS. IF NOT US, WHO? WHEN WE LOOK AT OUR CULTURE WHERE DO PEOPLE LOOK FOR HOPE AND WITH IT WHAT THEY CAN BE? IT SEEMS A NUMBER OF OUR "INSTITUTIONS" – ATHLETES, POLITICIANS, ACTORS, AND EVEN SOME RELIGIOUS FIGURES THAT WE LOOKED UP TO AND PUT OUR TRUST IN HAVE FAILED US.

PEOPLE WILL FAIL OR DISAPPOINT US AND THAT IS THE REASON WE MUST DIRECT PEOPLE TO GOD AND JESUS CHRIST, WHO WILL NOT FAIL THEM. THINK ABOUT IT – THAT MOTTO ON OUR COINAGE – "IN GOD WE TRUST" – DO WE??? **IF WE "*WALK IN WISDOM*" WE WILL LET OTHERS KNOW THE GRATITUDE IN OUR HEART FOR HIM BECAUSE WE CAN PUT OUR TRUST IN HIM**.

ANOTHER PART OF "*WALKING IN WISDOM*" IS WORSHIP. VERSE 19 IN EPHESIANS TALKS OF "*Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*". GOD DOES NOT EXPECT US TO BE IN ISOLATION. HIS DESIRE IS FOR US TO BE IN COMMUNITY AND LEARN FROM HIS WORD AND FROM EACH OTHER. NO ONE PERSON HAS ALL THE ANSWERS, BECAUSE IF THEY CLAIM THEY DO, THEN YOU BETTER HEAD THE OTHER WAY. HISTORY IS FULL OF SUCH PEOPLE – HITLER, MANSON, JIM JONES AND MANY MORE. WISDOM IS NOT A SOLO ACT.

IN THIS VERSE OF EPHESIANS ARE THREE TYPES OF MUSIC THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US. THE FIRST TYPE IS THE PSALMS. THEY REMIND US THAT THE PSALMS THAT WE HAVE IN THE BIBLE ARE ESSENTIALLY WORDS TO SONGS THAT HAVE RHYTHM AND MEASURE (AND SOMETIMES REPETITION!). THEY SPEAK ABOUT THE NATURE AND WORK OF GOD WITH THE PURPOSE TO MAGNIFY AND GLORIFY HIM.

THE NEXT TYPE MENTIONED IS HYMNS. THESE WERE NEW TESTAMENT SONGS OF PRAISE THAT FOCUSED ON THE PERSON OF JESUS.

THE LAST TYPE IS SPIRITUAL SONGS WHICH SEEM TO POINT TO THE IDEA OF SPONTANEOUS PRAISE. THESE TYPES OF SONGS ARE MEANT TO UNITE US IN THANKS AND PRAISE TO GOD AND JESUS CHRIST. THAT'S THE REASON I BEGIN THE SERVICE WITH A SONG OF PRAISE TO GOD, A HYMN OF PREPARATION FOCUSING ON JESUS AND HIS ATTRIBUTES.

NUMEROUS TIMES THROUGHOUT THE PSALMS WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO SING TO THE LORD, AND PRAISE GOD FOR IT IS GOD WHO HAS PUT A NEW SONG WITHIN US. **IF WE, INDEED, ARE "WALKING IN WISDOM" WE CANNOT HELP BUT EXPRESS THE JOY FROM WITHIN BECAUSE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.**

THE LAST VERSE OF TODAY'S READING IS SHORT, BUT THERE IS A POWERFUL IMPACT WITHIN ITS WORDS. "*Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.*" THE EARLY CHURCH KNEW THEY WERE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT. PUT ANOTHER WAY IT WAS THEM, THE EARLY CHURCH, AGAINST THE WORLD, THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

DO WE SENSE THAT WE AS THE COMMUNITY OF CENTENNIAL, THAT WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER? IF WE ARE "WALKING IN WISDOM" THEN WE DO.

AMEN.