**Wisdom**

Matthew 5:1-12

We saw two weeks ago that:

**Self Control is:**

1. Right **Thinking**
   * Shaped by God’s **Word**
2. Right **Speaking**
   * Filled with God’s **Goodness**
3. Right **Acting**
   * Devoted to God’s **Will**

Today we will continue from that final point of ***right ACTING***, living in accordance with God’s will - into **the virtue of WISDOM**. The Biblical idea of wisdom is very action oriented. Our modern idea of wisdom is more theoretical, more about philosophy. But in the Bible ***wisdom is knowledge APPLIED*** - it is truth in action; theology lived out.

Here is our summary for today:

**Wisdom is:**

1. Understanding the **Truth**
2. Believing **God’s Word**
3. **Living out** what you know and believe

We’ve just heard the beginning of Jesus’ sermon on the mount, known as **the Beatitudes**. In this masterful three chapter message Jesus gives an overview of ***the principles of the Kingdom of God***. He introduces God’s perspective, God’s wisdom. And what comes through loud and clear is that this wisdom from God - this truth about God’s Kingdom - MUST change how you live. If it just changes how you think and talk but doesn’t change how you live then you are a hypocrite, a religious talker who is actually a fool, not wise. Listen to the closing verses of the sermon on the mount:

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.” Matthew 7:24-25

“And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” Matthew 7:26-27

The wise builder is not the one who hears and UNDERSTANDS but ***the one who hears and OBEYS. He DOES them***. He changes his life to line up with the wisdom of God and the principles of God’s kingdom. Wisdom is about life application - it is about lining up your life with the truth you understand and believe.

So let’s follow Jesus’ approach and think of our lives like houses. If you were building a new house and realized ***you had poured the foundation in a sinkhole***, what would you do? You would abandon that location and find a new spot, right? You wouldn’t just blindly keep building where you knew the house would just collapse into the soft ground!

What if you’d already put walls up and a roof? What if you had nearly finished the house? Would you move in? Would you ignore the truth you had learned about sinkholes? Would you try to forget what you believed to be true about sinkholes? Would you keep your wife and kids from googling, ***“what happens to a house on a sinkhole”*** and set up blockers for youtube searches of house sinkhole fails?

I’ll save you the tempting search - here is the top hit:

PLZ GET THE FIRST 30 SECONDS OF THIS CLIP:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DSSJIGmg4U>

As soon as you discovered your house was on a sinkhole you would get out, and you certainly wouldn’t move in. ***How FOOLISH would you have to be to ignore everything you know about sinkholes and live as if everything was ok?***

But the reality of discipleship in America is that ***we have built a lot of our training and approach on the sinkhole of the mega-church model*** that is all about CONSUMING - all about YOUR EXPERIENCE. If one church doesn’t meet all of your needs or doesn’t have the right music, or the right pastor or the best preaching or the best kids or youth program - the mega-church model says, “Just go down the street and find the church that will best meet your needs.”

Before finding Oakwood 5 years ago I actually got pretty far along in discussions with a ***mega church in Ohio*** that was looking for a Campus Pastor. It wasn’t in the EFCA so I was reluctant on that front. But what sealed it for me and Kristin that it wasn’t the church for us was the guiding philosophy of the church to cater to the needs and desires of everyone who came. My job as that Campus Pastor would essentially have been to be ***a customer service agent*** for 2,000 people, especially the first and second time guests.

In an effort to lock me in, they had me talk with the senior pastor and I asked him about this and to explain the vision and philosophy of the church. And I’m not exaggerating, this is literally what he said: “I’m actually about to release a book called, ***‘It’s all about YOU!’***” That’s a sentence they frequently used at that church and they actually expressed it explicitly.



Most churches wouldn’t be that overt about a message like that. But it is the implied message of the megachurch approach - and all of us have been infected by that virus and our culture’s overall consumer mindset.

That is ***the sinkhole under the megachurch model*** - **consumerism**. A lot of people come to church primarily for “what’s in it for me?”

But that flips the message of Jesus upside down. Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve. ***He did not send his disciples out with the American commission***, “go and make consumer-minded converts, assuring them that they are saved with the most meager of commitments to me and then pandering to their various and ever-changing desires.”

Jesus did not come teaching the message - “It’s all about you! You’re the boss! How can I meet all of your needs?” No! The first word in his gospel message was REPENT. And the essence of his teaching was the KINGDOM in which **HE is king, not us**. So let’s look at the Beatitudes and find these ***three parts of wisdom***, asking the Holy Spirit to give us the wisdom we need so we can understand, believe and then LIVE differently. And when the Holy Spirit shows us a sinkhole in our lives, let’s pray for the wisdom and courage to CHANGE and live differently!

**Wisdom is:**

1. Understanding the **Truth**

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. 5:3

**Nine times Jesus repeats the word “BLESSED.”** In these simple but profound statements Jesus completely reverses the usual idea of “the good life,” or the happy life or the life that God has blessed. If you had come today with a list of ***nine blessings in your life*** for which you are thankful, I wonder how many of us would have included any of the nine things Jesus mentions here. Here is the truth:

**Wisdom is:**

1. Understanding the **Truth**
   * God’s **Kingdom** is better than this world

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. 5:3

**There is a blessing that only God offers and it is found in HIS KINGDOM.** This was the central message Jesus preached - the message of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Who gets into the kingdom? Who IS in the kingdom? ***Who is the one God blesses?*** Aren’t the wealthy blessed by God? Aren’t those who have land and houses and money blessed?

Not if they love that land and house and money more than God.

The one who is truly blessed, who is truly happy, is the one who is POOR IN SPIRIT - who realizes that He actually has NOTHING. If you think you are rich, guess what? You’re actually poor. ***It is only when you realize how poor you are that you have access to the true wealth only Jesus can give you.* The Pharisees**, the religious leaders of Jesus day, thought for sure they were the blessed ones. They had the knowledge, they had the power, they had the money. But Jesus had nothing but confrontation and condemnation for them. He did not think they were the blessed ones.

Have we come to really understand this truth - that ***God’s kingdom is BETTER than this world***? That is where wisdom begins. And let’s be honest that we struggle to really see and understand this. Let’s be realistic with how affected we are by our American culture. Naturally we will not perceive this truth. Naturally we will be fools who live for this world and deep down think the world is better than God’s kingdom.

But wisdom must move from understanding to belief:

**Wisdom is:**

1. Believing **God’s Word**
   * Those who **Repent** and commit to Jesus enter God’s Kingdom

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matthew 5:4

The blessed ones recognize they bring nothing of value - no righteousness, no wealth, no power. The blessed ones also ***mourn over their sin*** - they repent. And not just once so they can get into “heaven” but every day because they remain poor in spirit and humbly aware of their selfish, worldly, sinful tendencies. ***They turn from this world and take hold of Jesus in faith***. They see Jesus as the pearl of great price, as the treasure in the field - so they give up everything they have to get that one thing - HIM.

**Wisdom is:**

1. Believing **God’s Word**
   * Those who **Repent** and commit to Jesus enter God’s Kingdom

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:5

***To be meek is not to be weak but to be fully surrendered to God’s control.*** The phrase in Greek is “under the hand,” - a term used for breaking a horse. Horses are not weak, but once they have been trained they have submitted their power to their owner.

***Have you come under the hand of God?*** Have you submitted your life and your power to His control? That is what it means to repent and believe in Jesus: it means you have committed to Him as your King. Because you know that His Kingdom is better than this world, you gladly turned away from all other allegiances and you bowed the knee to King Jesus. That is real repentance and genuine faith: a pledge of total devotion to Christ. That’s the progression of the first three beatitudes, which are the roots of faith: humility, repentance and commitment.

Wisdom is understanding the truth, believing God’s Word and third:

**Wisdom is:**

1. **Living Out** what you know and believe

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Matthew 5:6

The roots of faith produce the fruit of life change by means of this central shoot - the trunk of the Christian tree, if you will - new appetites. At the moment you commit to Jesus in faith, He gives you a new heart and **His Holy Spirit comes to live in that new heart**. Before Jesus, your desires are controlled by your selfish, sinful nature. After Jesus takes over, your desires begin to change because the Holy Spirit is now active in your life. Sins you used to enjoy, you can’t enjoy anymore. Things you were once complacent about now become important to you - like reading the Bible, praying, loving and serving others, coming to worship, meeting with other believers.

But the thing with any appetites is that they can and must be CULTIVATED. If you realize you have a ***digestive intolerance to something like gluten***, you start to change your diet so you don’t get stomach aches and other symptoms I can’t discuss up here. If you’re like me, you really like gluten and all things processed and filled with white flour and sugar - like Pop Tarts. If I suddenly became diabetic or had to be gluten free it would represent a seismic shift in my lifestyle - in which I would have to cultivate new appetites for things I’ve heard about like vegetables.

Kristin and I made the switch years ago from Coke to Diet Coke and then **from Diet Coke to Soda water**. LaCroix or Bubly is now our special drink and we have come to really enjoy those. But if we have something like a Diet Dr. Pepper it feels like a really special treat. And if I accidentally drink the boy’s real Coke it’s like this sudden, powerful infusion of sugar that is shocking to the system. Over the course of several years we changed our practice and cultivated a new preference for soda water that is healthier for us. One day I’ll grow up and do the same thing with pop tarts. Kristin actually is already in the process with eggs and avocado - so you health nuts can stop worrying about me and my cholesterol. Or maybe worry more - I clearly don’t know how those things work.

Here’s the point: the hinge of your Christian life is your appetites - your desires. ***What do you hunger and thirst for?*** Naturally, our sinful nature will hunger and thirst for the things of this world. We all have programmed in appetites for the things we enjoy like food, drink, sports, entertainment, shopping - whatever. Most of these are morally neutral but some are definitely sinful and can become sinful if taken too far.

Compare, for example, our appetites for **streaming TV shows to reading the Bible.** There is so much content out there, so much available that appeals to all different kinds of preferences, that it is very easy to get hooked on the latest British crime series or the newest Star Wars mini-series. ***BINGING has become the norm with television.*** Isn’t that tragic and revealing that we took a word from EATING DISORDERS and have happily applied it to our entertainment habits???

I’m not saying it’s wrong to have Netflix or some other streaming service - but it is something to be aware of, especially if you don’t have a well established habit of reading God’s Word and praying. The fact is that ***we have to cultivate an appetite for God’s Word and prayer and fellowship and ministry.***

**Wisdom is:**

1. **Living Out** what you know and believe
   * Prioritize Scripture, prayer and disciplemaking

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8

***This is WISDOM - to actually DO what you know you should do.*** We can easily let verses like this bounce right off. Yes, I understand there is a blessing for the pure in heart - those who are single-minded, who are focused on God and His Kingdom first foremost. Got it. I understand. We might even believe that it’s true. “I believe that if I focus on God and His Word I will see Him, I will experience His love and grace in new and fresh and powerful ways.” I believe that.

But that is not yet wisdom. Understanding and believing that prompts **LIFE CHANGE** - that is wisdom. The new habits, the new commitments, the new priorities - those are expressions of wisdom.

So let’s be real and up front about the alternative. If we know and understand things like this from the Bible ***but we DON’T make adjustments to our schedule and priorities***, what does that make us?

***Fools.***

Let’s be honest enough to recognize this truth.

When Gandalf hung from the remnants of ***the bridge of Khazad Dum*** and Frodo and the rest of the fellowship of the ring were frozen there looking back at him, what did the gray wizard say?

***“Fly! You fools!”***

Swarms of evil bad guys called orcs, including dozens, even hundreds of archers, were racing toward the band of heroes. If they stayed in that location they would all die. So as Gandalf plunged into darkness, the company of eight had to move forward without him.

Brothers and sisters, if we keep doing what we’ve always done - ***if we keep adding more and more knowledge to our heads*** without obeying the Bible and living out what we learn - **we are fools**. We need to realize that the church leaders of the past who have gotten us to this point in America cannot lead us where we need to go. If we stay where we are, we will fail in our mission to make disciples of all nations. We need to learn new ways and challenge and encourage one another in WISDOM - understanding, believing and OBEYING God’s Word.

***Will it be easy?*** Look at the last two verses of this passage:

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:11-12

The eighth and final blessing in the beatitudes is for those who are **persecuted** - those who suffer for the name of Jesus. We might understand this principle in theory, but I wonder if we actually believe it to be true.

***If persecution actually broke out suddenly in the U.S. would we feel blessed?*** If churches lost our non-profit status, if speaking against homosexuality became a hate crime and preacher ended up in jail for it; if churches that stand firm on the authority of the Bible are shut down and our property confiscated, would we feel blessed?

The fastest growing church in the world right now is in Iran - entirely underground. One of the leaders of a housechurch network in Iran was asked what the keys were to their rapid growth and he gave five key reasons he saw the church growing rapidly. First, ***desperate prayer***. They know how much they need the Lord so they cry out in continual prayer. Second, ***deep relationships***. The believers cling to one another, support and love one another. Iran is a closely knit culture of relationships in families and clans - so where in other Muslim countries your parents or siblings will beat you up or kill you for converting, in Iran they are finding if one person converts often the whole family will convert as well.

Third, he said the church is growing in Iran through ***deliberate evangelism*** - new believers share their faith with great passion. Older believers continue to share their faith and train the new ones in how to do it. Fourth, ***church planting*** - they are not hindered by the expectation of buildings or paid pastors so they can rapidly open new house churches.

And fifth, arguably one of the main reasons the church is growing so rapidly in Iran is that the believers ***embrace suffering*** as part of the call of Christ. They don’t just expect it or brace themselves for it - they EMBRACE the fact of suffering and experience the joy of sharing in the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus told his very first disciples that they would experience BLESSING in being persecuted. Wisdom not only understands and believes teachings like this, but moves forward to live out what we know and believe. I’m not saying we should pursue persecution. But I believe the New Testament does call us to challenge our status quo and ***embrace the practice of making CHANGES, expecting some of them to be UNCOMFORTABLE.***

**Wisdom is:**

1. **Living Out** what you know and believe
   * Prioritize Scripture, prayer and disciplemaking

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations… teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:19-20

We are in the process at Oakwood of ***adjusting to a disciplemaking culture***. We realize that our church, like most American churches, struggles in that area. We tend to value information over transformation. We tend to prioritize knowledge over application. We have done pretty well at teaching content, but we have not done as well at training obedience.

**The Great Commission is clear** - our task is to make disciples - “teaching them to observe” everything the Lord Jesus commanded - including and especially the Great Commission itself.

At some level we all understand this truth. I’m sure we all believe that discipleship is important and obedience is a key part of discipleship. ***But we have not reached WISDOM until we begin to adjust our lives*** to line up with what we know and believe.

Now, I’m not trying to apply the Law to our hearts today. Our goal, as always, is to apply the Gospel.

| ↑ | Jesus perfectly understood, believed and lived out God’s will |
| --- | --- |
| ↓ | We fail to understand, believe and live out God’s will |
| ❤ | Jesus came to **Reveal** the fullness of God’s wisdom and will |
| → | So we can live in wisdom as we follow Jesus and **Walk** with His Spirit |

To appreciate wisdom we have to ***look at the life of Jesus***. He perfectly understood, believed and lived in line with God’s Word and God’s Will. Compared to His perfection, we all fall far short in all three areas. We don’t fully understand the truth; we don’t completely believe God’s Word and we don’t always live in line with what we know and believe.

But even when we were still sinners, in exactly that condition Jesus came to us as **the light of the world**. He brought the full revelation of the wisdom of God - and that wisdom centers on the mystery of the gospel - that salvation is found in Christ alone.

Since we have been united with Jesus by faith, ***we have all that He has*** and all that He is - including His WISDOM. We have the Spirit of God inside us and have access to His Wisdom at any moment, for the asking. So we can live in wisdom, in line with God’s Word and God’s will.

***And we also have EACH OTHER***. Part of the blessing and calling of one anothering is helping each other walk in wisdom and avoid the foolishness, distractions and temptations of the world. So whom can you encourage this week? Who could guide you in the way of wisdom?

Let’s pray.

Benediction - Eph. 5:15-18.