

**The Second Sunday after Christmas, January 3, 2021**

Pastor Peter Gregory, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Westminister, Massachusetts

## The Wisdom of Jesus

Luke 2:40–52

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Eph 1:2*

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At the beginning of today's Gospel reading, this is what St. Luke says about Jesus' childhood: **The Child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon Him** (v 40). At the end of the reading, after Jesus is found in the temple as a twelve-year-old, St. Luke again says: **Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man** (v 52).

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How did Jesus get such wisdom?

Sitting among the teachers in the temple,

listening to them and asking them questions,

He has wisdom way beyond His twelve years of age.

Answering His parents

who are greatly distressed at having left Him behind in Jerusalem,

He has wisdom even they don't understand.

And yet . . . Jesus doesn't act like some know-it-all wise guy.

He isn't too big for His britches.

He also has the wisdom to know His place.

So He returned with His earthly parents to Nazareth

and was submissive to them.

This is the profound wisdom of One

who fears and loves God above all things.

He doesn't despise His parents.

Instead, He honors them, serves and obeys them,

loves and cherishes them.

3.

Even as a child and a young man, Jesus was filled with wisdom.

It seems that His own family and friends

weren't sure where it came from

Old Simeon had said that Jesus was appointed  
for the fall and rising of many in Israel,  
and for a sign that's opposed.

We see this play out in the way people listen to Jesus.  
Some would be amazed by His understanding and His answers.  
Some would be angered by what He said and did.  
Some would drop everything and follow Him.  
Some would shout for Him to be crucified.

God chose to shame the wise  
by what is foolish in the world (1 Cor 1:27)—  
by a newborn baby laid in a manger,  
by a twelve-year-old teaching the teachers,  
by an innocent man condemned to death by crucifixion.

We can already begin to sense the questions people will ask later on:  
“Where does He get these things?  
What's this wisdom given to Him?  
How can His hands do such mighty works?  
Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary,  
whose brothers and sisters we know?” (Mk 6:1–3 paraphrase).

His own hometown doesn't believe it.  
When He heals a man born blind on the Sabbath, the Pharisees say,  
“We know that this man is a sinner” (John 9:24).  
They mean Jesus. They can't make heads or tails of Him.  
Truly, the foolishness of God is wiser than men.

So also Joseph and Mary were astonished  
when they saw Jesus in the temple.  
They may have wondered:  
“Isn't this our son?  
We taught Him how to run and walk and hammer and saw,  
but where did He learn this stuff?  
How does He come to teach the teachers of Israel?  
And why does He treat us like this?”  
God's ways are higher than their ways.  
His wisdom deeper than their understanding.

The wisdom of Jesus isn't like that of a child prodigy, genius,  
or wonder kid.

Something different is going on with Him.  
 This wisdom is His by nature.  
 No one gave it to Him, not even Mary or Joseph.  
 It didn't come from experience or education or grace.  
 He didn't read about it in a book  
 or pick it up from a video on YouTube.

He's the Wisdom behind creation.  
 He's the Wisdom that wrote the Books of Moses  
 and the Ten Commandments.  
 He's the Wisdom that inspired the prophets.  
 He's the Wisdom that spoke every psalm and proverb.  
 He's the Wisdom of God—  
 the Wisdom of God in human form.

## 2.

There's a difference between the wisdom of Jesus  
 and the wisdom of Solomon.  
 Solomon was wise—  
 yes, even one of wisest people who ever lived.  
 Yet he was not wise by nature.  
 He knew this only too well.  
 Because he wasn't wise, he prayed for wisdom:  
 "You, O God, have made me king in place of David my father,  
 although I'm only a little child.  
 I don't know how to go out or come in.  
 And your servant is in the midst of your chosen people,  
 a great people, too many to be numbered or counted.  
 Therefore, give me an understanding mind, to govern your people,  
 that I may discern between good and evil,  
 for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"  
 (1 Kgs 3:7–9 paraphrase).

As it says in the book of James:  
 "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God,  
 who gives generously to all without reproach,  
 and it will be given him" (Jas 1:5)

God heard Solomon's prayer for wisdom  
He gave him wisdom to rule  
—wisdom to rule long and well and for the good of His people.  
He had wisdom in judgment about human affairs.  
He had wisdom with respect to the created world.  
He had wisdom for life in this fallen world.

We are like Solomon, not Jesus.  
We are like little children.  
Wisdom doesn't come naturally to us.  
We don't know what to do—  
how to love or serve or discern good from evil.  
We aren't up to the work we're given—  
to love husband or wife,  
to raise children,  
to care for family members,  
to be good citizens and friends and neighbors,  
to do our work and have dominion over the creation.  
Left to ourselves, we would bring it all to ruin.  
And too often we have.  
Too often, we've relied on our own wisdom.  
We've become fools,  
and others have suffered because of it.

What's true for me is true for all:  
In myself, I lack an understanding mind.  
I fail to discern between good and evil.  
I don't have the wisdom to serve or govern well.  
It's all too much for us.

Thank God that He has what we lack!  
Thank God that He hears our prayers!  
Thank God that He gives wisdom!

But let Solomon be a warning to us.  
While His long reign is marked by great wisdom,  
in old age he becomes a picture of wisdom disconnected from God.  
He forgot that wisdom is a gift.

He let it go to his head.  
 He became too wise for his own good,  
     like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden.  
 He tried to be wiser than God.

## 1.

But Jesus is greater than Solomon.  
 He comes to the Father's house.  
 The Spirit of Wisdom rests on Him.

True wisdom doesn't seek to impress others.  
 It doesn't seek its own honor or praise.  
 It doesn't seek power or wealth.  
 It isn't the same as smarts or intellectual ability or degrees.  
 It doesn't necessarily increase with age or experience.  
 It grows with use.  
 When Scripture says that Jesus increased in wisdom,  
     it doesn't mean that He was lacking wisdom.  
 It means that, as a man, He grew in putting wisdom to use.  
 At every age, at every stage, He lived wisely.

True wisdom is selfless.  
 It doesn't serve itself; it serves others.  
 It comes from God  
     and is present in Christ  
     and is revealed in His word.  
 It can only be used rightly in connection with God.  
 It keeps His commandments.  
 It loves Him; it loves others.

This is the wisdom we see in Jesus—  
     the wisdom that brings Him to the Father's house,  
     the wisdom that makes Him be about His Father business,  
     the wisdom that calls Him to do the Father's will.

He had the wisdom to judge rightly  
     and to love completely and to live fully.  
 He looked at us and saw what we needed.

He knew His place, if He was to love the Father and serve us.

That place was the cross.

Wisdom sent Him there.

Wisdom knew what the Law demanded and did it.

Wisdom loved God perfectly and loved you perfectly.

Wisdom suffered the death that fools deserve—  
the shame, the mockery, the suffering of the cross.

Jesus is there in the Father's house as true wisdom,  
wisdom obedient to the Law,  
wisdom full of love,  
wisdom that seeks not itself but others,  
wisdom that increases all the way to the cross.

Do any of us lack wisdom?

Wisdom is yours in Jesus and in His word,  
the wisdom you need to live and to love and to serve.

The wisdom of His mercy toward you.

The wisdom of His forgiveness for you.

The wisdom of His eternal, undying life that is yours.

The more we have Jesus, the more we grow in this wisdom.

What is His by nature is yours by grace.

It's His gift to you—  
given again and again.

As St. Paul says,

“You are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God”  
(1 Cor 1:30).

And so we, too, become the children of wisdom,  
through faith in Jesus Christ.

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The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ  
Jesus.

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*Phil 4:7*