

The Two Great Equalisers

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- [0 : 0 0] The scripture reading today comes from the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 9 and 10. Please follow along on your own Bible, in the bulletin, or on the screen. Starting in chapter 9, verse 1, we read, But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.
- Whether it is love or hate, man does not know. Both are before him. It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.
- As the good one is, so is the sinner. And he who swears is as he who shunts an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all.
- Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live. And after that, they go to the dead. But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dot is better than a dead lion.
- For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing. And they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.
- [1 : 4 3] Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white.
- Let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life, and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.
- Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol to which you are going.
- Again, I saw that under the sun, the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.
- For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time when it suddenly falls upon them.
- [3 : 0 1] I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siege works against it.
- But there was found in it a poor wise man, and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man.
- But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard. The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.
- Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good. Dead flies make the perfumant's ointment give off a stench, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left. Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool.

[4 : 18] If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for calmness will lay great offenses to rest. There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler.

Folly is had in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves.

He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. He who quarries stones is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them.

If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength. But wisdom helps one to succeed. If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there is no advantage to the charmer.

The words of a wise man's mouth win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him. This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Anastasia.

[5 : 34] Thank you for reading well. And once again, we come to this interesting, but tricky passage in Ecclesiastes. And I think if you're anything like me, the first time you read that, you think, okay.

On Monday morning, when I sat down with my Bible, and started to think about this morning, I read that for the first time, and thought, okay, this is going to be interesting. What is the author, what is Kohelet, the teacher, trying to say to us?

Well, the author is coming back to one of the ideas that we looked at last week. He is, in the second half of the reading, he is considering wisdom once again.

Remember last week, we spoke about wisdom, and Kohelet, the teacher, he said he sought for wisdom everywhere, and he couldn't find it. Well, he comes back to that idea this morning, and I want us just to think about this, because I didn't feel like last week, I actually explained wisdom very well, and so let's just take a minute or two, to think about that.

What is wisdom? I tried to say last week, in the Bible, wisdom is the skill of living life well.

[6 : 50] It is, you could say, knowing how to make life work. It's the skill of knowing how to flourish in your life. Now, when we think of wisdom, it doesn't sound like a very sexy or exciting word.

I don't think too many of us lie awake at night thinking, how can I become more wise? Right? We're scrolling Google about, I don't think it's one of Google's top ten searches.

How do I become more of a wise person? But if you think about it, what the Bible promises that wisdom gives us, how to make life work, the flourishing life, is actually something that all of us want.

How many of us don't want to make life work? How many of us don't want to flourish? How many of us, if you're young, don't want to think about how not to waste your life?

It's the reason so many young people come to me often and say, I'm looking for a mentor in life. Can you help me find a mentor? Someone who can guide me and coach me. It's the reason we listen to TED Talks and podcasts and read brilliant books because there's a desire inside of us to make life work, to not waste our lives, to find out the way to a flourishing life.

[8 : 07] And so we want to know how to make our finances work and make relationships work and make our careers work, how to make work-life balance work. And so wisdom is the skill of knowing how to make life work when you don't have the answers in front of you.

Wisdom is knowing, is the skill of being able to find out what is the right thing to do when you don't know what to do. And so that's why Proverbs says, of all the skills you can get in life, make sure you acquire the skill of knowing how to make life work, the skill of living.

Because it is one skill that can set you apart from your colleagues and your friends and your families. The skill of knowing how to make life work. And the ancient biblical word for this skill is the skill of wisdom.

Okay? Wisdom. Wisdom. Now, as I said last week in chapters 8, the teacher, Kohelet, is trying to search out, seek for this wisdom.

And he looks everywhere, but he can't find it. In chapter 10 and 9, he seems to have found it. He seems to have stumbled upon it because he talks about it quite a bit.

[9 : 22] But the teacher is in two minds about it. Because on one hand, when Anastasia reads to us, on one hand you think, okay, he's really saying wisdom is a good thing.

He espouses some of the benefits of it. But on the other hand, he seems a little bit condescending towards it. He seems like he says, oh, you know, get wisdom, it's good for you, but actually it's not going to help that much at the end of the day.

And so he seems to be in two minds about it. Well, let's see what he says. Look at chapter 9, verse 13 to 15. Now, once again, you're going to need your bulletin or a Bible in front of you.

I don't have the scriptures on the screen, so you're going to need to follow in front of you. Look at what he says. He says, wisdom is able to be a great benefit to society. It's actually able to save many lives.

He says, verse 13, I have seen an example of wisdom under the sun. It seemed great to me. There was this little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siege works around the city.

[10 : 26] But there was found in it a poor man, a wise man, and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city. So here's this poor man.

He's not very wealthy. He's not very well-esteemed. He's kind of despised and rejected. But by his wisdom, he's able to save the city and actually save a great many people's lives.

Wisdom is a great benefit to society. And if you think about that, that's true in our modern life today. Think of the number of people who, by their wisdom, are able to save a great many people's lives.

Think of doctors and nurses and people who respond in emergency situations. They are presented with the situation before them. They haven't been trained for that situation.

But by their wisdom, they are able to find a solution where no solution seems obvious. And they save a great many people's lives. We can be thankful for the doctors and the nurses during COVID, who many of them put their lives on the line, many of them working insane hours through the night, finding solutions where there were no obvious solutions, and saved a great many people's lives.

[11 : 36] The teacher also says this. He says, Through wisdom, we're able to find success where success seems to evade us.

Look at 10 verse 10. He says, If the axe is blunt and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength. But wisdom helps one to succeed. He's saying, Listen, you've got a situation before you and you get stuck.

You come up against a brick wall. You can't find a way through. But actually, wisdom enables you to overcome the obstacles in life. And again, think of the great benefit this is to us.

Think of many of the things that we take for granted in our lives, but have not, we shouldn't take for granted. Think of things like running water, transport, engineering feats that allow us to live in massive buildings, airplanes that fly in the sky.

For centuries, even millennia, these things were things that most of society didn't have in front of them. But someone was able, through wisdom, to find a solution and to break through the barriers.

[12 : 42] So we can be very grateful you don't need to walk a kilometer with a bucket in your hand down to the river to find fresh running water. No, you just turn on a tap. Wisdom is able to bring great benefit to our lives.

But look at what else he says. He says, the life of wisdom is a source of joy and blessing to those who possess it, but also to those around them.

Look at in 10 verse 12, the final words that Anastasia read to us. He says, the words of a wise man's mouth bring favor or bring grace. I don't know if you've ever spent an evening with a really wise person, someone you really esteem and look up to.

And they just being themselves, but you feel so enriched by them. The Hebrew here could mean that if you're a wise person, your words bring grace and favor to your life because you're able to navigate the challenges of life or you bring grace and blessing to those around you.

If you ever spend time with someone who's really wise, you feel like just their words deposit grace into your life. You come away from spending time with that person just feeling enriched in life.

[13 : 56] You feel so much better. And actually, how much better when such a person is the leader of a city because Anastasia didn't read it to us, but in verse 10, he says, woe to you, O land, when your king is a young and immature and foolish leader.

You've got a leader of a city, they're immature, they're young, they're foolish, they're living for themselves, they're self-centered, they're not very wise. And what happens? The whole city languishes under their rulership.

But O blessed are you, O land, when your rulers are wise, they bring grace and favor and blessing into your life. And so, again and again, the Bible says wisdom is a great blessing, a great benefit.

It's a friend to us. That's why Proverbs says, seek out wisdom, search for it, pay for it. Even if it costs you, whatever you do, get wisdom.

It's a great friend. to our lives. Friends, our lives and the lives of those around us and our city would be so much better, so much more blessed if we were able to fill our hearts and our lives with wisdom.

[15 : 04] But the teacher here also notices something else and he says, even the most wise, even the most brilliant of people, even those that we really look up to in honor and esteem, even they are not immune from the shortcomings of wisdom.

He says, knowing how to make life work, you know how to flourish in life, it can serve you, it can be a friend, but it's not a silver bullet.

It doesn't solve all of life's problems because even the most brilliant, the most wise of us are still going to encounter the shortcomings of wisdom. Look at what he says in 9 verse 15.

Remember he talks about that poor man, that wise man, who saved his village by his wisdom. He says there was found in it a wise man, he by his wisdom delivered the city, but the next line, yet no one remembered him.

No one remembered his wisdom. In other words, here is a city that is saved by this man, but 30 years later he dies, and another king comes and besieges the city, and no one remembers his wisdom, and the city, the village is just wiped out, and in the grand scheme of things, who remembers, who cares?

[16:19] Nobody. He's forgotten. And isn't that true of our lives as well? Think of this city in which we live a hundred years ago. Many brilliant, wise, outstanding people, very selfless people, people who laid down their lives for the good of their families or those around them.

A hundred years later, does anybody remember them? What difference did their lives really make? Think of even the names that our streets are named after, right? That's one of the great things about Hong Kong.

All these street names named after brilliant people. Do any of us know what they actually did? More than a handful of them? You can have the streets named after you, you can have a whole city named after you, but in 200, 300 years' time, who cares really?

Wisdom is good, but it's short-lived. Look at what else he says. He says, Wisdom is great, but it so quickly gets spoiled or cancelled.

Look at 10, verse 1. He says, Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

[17:29] Isn't that such a great picture, right? You've got a cake to your birthday. Someone bakes you a cake. You're so excited and you cut it open and there's a worm inside.

And that little thing spoils the whole cake, right? You're not going to say, Oh, I'll just remove that little piece, but the rest of it lets enjoy. What are you going to do? You're probably going to throw it all out.

But isn't that true of life, right? You have somebody who's really brilliant, they're absolutely wise, they may be a great boss, a great leader, it may be your company or an industry, maybe a great pastor, they really invest in your life, and they make one stupid decision, one foolish act, one dumb mistake, and how are their lives remembered for the rest of their lives?

They are forever known as the one person that brought down that company or destroyed that industry or ruined that church. Forty years of selfless service 40 years of brilliant wisdom and teaching, 40 years of great leadership is reduced to nothing in a moment.

Wisdom is such a great gift, but it gets cancelled so quickly. Friends, you can spend the next 40 years of your life building your name, your reputation, and in an instant it can get cancelled.

[18:53] It can get spoiled. Look what else he says here. He says, as great as it is to be a wise person, wisdom can't deliver you from the unpredictableness of life.

We all tend to think that if we live life well, if we have the smarts, if we're academically sharp and diligent and we work hard, we will make life work.

We will succeed. And the teacher says, not necessarily. Even the smartest people in life, there's unpredictableness. Look what he says in 10, verse 8 and 9.

He says, a wise man, he plans a building project, he digs a pit, oh, he falls into it and he dies. An architect, an engineer, he decides to break through a wall and he doesn't know on the other side death is waiting for him.

Verse 9, he who quarries stones, he wants to build his retirement home and so he gets some stones and he's just chiseling them off, just doing the final touches to his dream home and he's left blind.

[20 : 00] Stone shoots up and takes out his eye. He who splits logs is endangered by them. Maybe you're the wisest person. You plan perfectly, you do your checks and balances, everything in order, but there's a whole lot of life that is unpredictable and beyond your control.

Maybe you're a very careful driver. driver. You drive very carefully, you always stick to the speed limit, safety belt, double safety belt, you drive the safest car on the road, oh, but there's a foolish driver that's looking at his phone and he cuts across traffic, takes you out.

When I was growing up, we had a very, very close family friend in South Africa and he used to, he drove motorbikes, he loved motorbikes, but he was an extremely careful driver.

He always said, you drive a motorbike like you drive the biggest lorry on the road. If you can't drive a bus through that gap, you don't take the gap, very safe driver. One day he flies back into Johannesburg, he phones his wife at the airport and says, I've just landed, I'll be home in 45 minutes, see you there.

He doesn't come home. He's driving home and a truck driver, a guy didn't have his license, wasn't concentrating, goes off the road, cuts across, hits him and in the instant he's dead. You can be the wisest person, but there's a whole lot of life that is unpredictable.

[21 : 20] You can't manage. And so look at what the teacher says. Finally, he says, the final thing about wisdom, he says, wisdom actually can't deliver you from the main problem, the one enemy, the one adversary that all of us ultimately must face and that is our mortality.

The fact that one day all of us are going to die. Look at what he says in chapter 9 verse 11 and 12. He says, again I saw under the sun the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong nor bread, he means economic like food to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to all of us.

For man does not know his time. Like fish, they are taken in an evil net. Like birds, they are caught up in an evil snare. So the children of man are snared at an evil time when it suddenly falls upon them.

He says, ultimately you can be the smartest, most brilliant person in the world. You can be the most diligent, hard working, well organized, sharpest person. But ultimately there is an adversary that all of us face that none of us can outsmart.

I heard a story recently of a man in the UK, he goes to an elders meeting at church one night, at the end of the elders meeting he gets a phone call. Your wife has just passed away.

[22 : 54] So what happened? She was healthy. Adult sudden death syndrome. No medical explanation, she is at home, she suddenly just dies. And the author wants us to see that the mortality rate for humanity is still 100%.

That all of us ultimately are going to die. And that's what the teacher Kehelith is saying. Even the brightest, even the smartest, even the shrewdest escape artist cannot escape our one final enemy, death.

Now I know that in Asia we don't like to talk about death very much, right? It's the thing we try to avoid talking about. We say when someone dies, we say they've passed on, they've passed away.

We have euphemisms to soften it, to not talk about it. Death is the one thing we all try to avoid thinking about and talking about.

Claire and I have this friend who's from Hong Kong, he grew up overseas abroad, and when he was younger, his father passed away one day, but the extended family was still here in Hong Kong and for two years they didn't tell the family that the father had passed away.

[24 : 20] And so the grandparents would phone and my friend would lower his voice and answer the phone and say, yes, yes, no, we're all doing well here, kids just send their love.

And for two years he would pretend to be his dad because they didn't want to let the family know that their son had passed away. We all try to avoid thinking about it and talking about it.

But actually, Kohelet, the teacher, says that thinking about our mortality, thinking about the fact that all of us one day are going to die, is actually a source of wisdom.

It's one of the ways that we can steward our lives well. Do you remember the prayer that Moses prays in Psalm 90? He says, teach us to number our days, O Lord, that we may get a heart of wisdom.

I know that we all think we're going to live forever, especially if you're 25 or younger, you feel like, I'm immortal, right? I'll never face those things. Old age is a long way off.

[25 : 25] Well, take it from me, your hair starts to recede sooner than you think. Right? Age old starts, old age starts to set in. But the teacher, Kohelet, says that thinking about death actually is one way that we get wisdom.

Realizing that we are not immortal helps us to steward our lives well. Look what he says here in chapter 9, verse 7 to 10. He says, he's talking about death and he says, so go and eat your bread with joy.

Drink your wine with a merry heart. He's saying, listen, you're not going to live life forever, so actually enjoy your life. And verse 9, enjoy life with the wife whom you love. Enjoy the days of your vain life that God has given you under the sun.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. Now, he's not saying just go party it up, take drugs, drink yourself into a stupor because, hey, you've just got one life to live.

YOLO, you only live once, so just, you know, make it happen, right? Because what does verse 8 say? Read it with me. He says, verse 8, let your garments always be white, let not oil be lacking on your head.

[26 : 43] So he's saying, live your life with purity, live your life before the face of God Almighty, but before God, live, enjoy your life to the one life that he's given you.

But ultimately, what Koheleth really wants us to get about death is this, that death is the great equalizer of all humanity.

Death is coming to all of us. He says, it doesn't matter who you are, what your background is, what your culture is, how brilliant or successful you've been.

It doesn't matter how healthy you eat, how much exercise you do. Exercise is good. It'll mean that when you are alive, at least your life will be maybe better. Exercise is good.

But even if you're the best exercise in the world, even if you only eat healthy food, you are still going to die. He says, it doesn't matter whether you're a billionaire or whether you sweep the streets for a living.

[27 : 44] It doesn't matter whether your name is on lights and newspapers, your name is on buildings all around Hong Kong, or nobody knows your name. All of us one day are going to face death.

Look at how he says it in chapter 9, verse 2 and 3. He says, it is the same for all of us since the same event happens to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the evil, to the clean and to the unclean, to him who sacrifices and to him who does not.

As the good one is, so is the sinner, the one who swears, and that means swears an oath to God, and the one who shuns his oath. This is an evil, there is an evil that is in all that is done under the sun.

The same event happens to all. The hearts of the children of man are full of evil and madness is in their hearts while they live. And after that, they all go to the dead.

The teacher is telling us that death is the great equalizer of all humanity. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, the ground at death's door is equal.

[28 : 53] You know, in Hong Kong we love to compare, right? Where do you live? What street do you live on? What school did you go to? What company do you work for?

How quickly have you progressed through your career? We love to compare. And the teacher here is saying all those comparisons ultimately are meaningless because there is an equalizer that will come to all of us.

The race is not to the swift. The battle is not to the strong. The rich is not to the intelligent. Time and chance happen to them all. This is life under the sun.

This is what the teacher observes and sees around him. This is our lot in life. And so he says seek wisdom. Wisdom can benefit you. Wisdom is good.

It can be your friend. But it's not the silver bullet. It cannot ultimately save you. Because one day all of us will face the call when death comes and knocks on our door.

[29 : 57] Death is the one great equalizer. Except that it's not. Friends, if you've been coming to Watermark for some time you'll know that there is another great equalizer that the Bible speaks about.

The great equalizer of all the world is not just the fact that all of us are one day going to die. In fact, the greatest equalizer that the Bible speaks about happened to one man and his death upon the cross.

Because Jesus Christ went to the cross and died to once again reset the balances and to equalize all of humanity.

Listen to how the Apostle Paul writes it in Romans chapter 3. He says, God's gift of grace is given to all who believe. For there is no distinction in life.

For all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And all who are in Christ are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ whom God put forward as an atoning sacrifice by his blood.

[31 : 17] Friends, the scripture says that all of humanity is infected and affected by the reality of sin. and all of humanity therefore is under sin's curse called death.

He says there is no distinction. All people, it doesn't matter your culture, your race, your background, your ethnicity, it doesn't matter whether you've got a trillion dollars in the bank account or you've got nothing.

All humanity, the great equalizer is that all of us have sinned and fall short of God's glory. The rich, the poor, the righteous, the unrighteous, the pastor, the drug addict, all of us are in the same boat.

That's what our passage says. Look at chapter 9 verse 5. He says, What is this? The hearts of the children of man are set on evil, set on madness. But friends, the good news of the gospel is that though all have sinned and though all have fallen short of God's glory, all are able to be forgiven healed, healed, justified, restored, ransomed, healed, because Jesus Christ went to the cross for the sins of all those who would turn to Him and trust Him.

Friends, Jesus didn't just go to the cross for the righteous, for the wealthy, for the privileged. Jesus didn't just go to the cross for the poor, for the marginalized, for the downhearted.

[32 : 57] Jesus Christ went to the cross for all humanity who would come to Him and trust in Him and look to Him. Elsewhere, the apostle Paul writes, and listen to what he says.

He says, In Christ Jesus, you are all sons and daughters of God through faith. for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek. Now, to us, that doesn't sound really radical.

But in the first century, that is a radical idea. That's like walking into Mississippi in 1963 and saying, there is no distinction between black and white, right?

That is a radical idea. There is no difference between Jew and Greek. Paul says, there is no difference between male and female. Again, a radical idea in the first century.

There is no difference between slave and free for Christ Jesus went to the cross for all humanity. Friends, the cross of Christ is the great equalizer.

[34 : 02] The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Come with your pride and your accolades and your credentials and you will be humbled. But come empty-handed with nothing in your hands, feeling guilty, worn down, broken, and you will be honored with the greatest honor, the name of Christ.

The name that Christ will give you. You will be called the son or daughter of the Most High King. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. But the Bible says that because Jesus really is God, because He died and He rose again, Jesus solves the two great problems that the teacher is grappling with in Ecclesiastes 9 and 10.

Look at how Jesus solves the problem of wisdom. Jesus Christ comes and gives you a wisdom that you can never achieve by simply observing life under the sun on your own.

In the book of James in the New Testament, the apostle James, who is actually the half-brother of Jesus, writes and he says, there's actually two different kinds of wisdom in this world. There's a wisdom that's observed that you gain just by observing life under the sun.

You listen to podcasts, you listen to TED Talks, you read great books. There's a wisdom that you can observe that you can gain by observing life under the sun. And it may help you get ahead in life, it may help you to progress in your career, but very often there's a trail of pain and destruction and broken relationships behind that kind of wisdom.

[35 : 39] And the apostle James says there's another kind of wisdom that comes from beyond the sun. And it's an upside-down wisdom. It's a wisdom that may not get your name on lights, it may not make you the most famous person in the world, but it's a wisdom that will answer the deep questions of life.

It's a wisdom that will help you to find out what life is all about. He says there's a different kind of wisdom, it's an upside-down wisdom.

It seems like foolishness to those who simply observe life under the sun. It's the kind of wisdom that will help you not to waste your life. But it's the kind of wisdom that comes not by trying to find wisdom, but by setting your heart on the one who truly is wisdom.

In the book of Proverbs, the writer says this, he says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And what that means is this, you don't find wisdom by trying to be wise, you find wisdom by setting your heart on Jesus who is wise himself.

Do you see that? That's a radically important idea. Think about that, the more you try to be impressive or smart or brilliant, how do you come across? You actually come across foolish, right?

[36 : 59] Have you ever come across somebody who in a social setting, they're always trying to look smart, they're always trying to be impressive, they're always trying to look as the wise person in the room and what do you think about that person?

They actually come across as foolish. But who is the person that's truly wise and truly impressive and truly brilliant? It's actually the person that forgets about themselves and isn't trying to be impressive, but actually sets themselves trying to serve and love others.

The one characteristic of all wise people is that they're actually not enamored with themselves at all. They've forgotten about themselves. The writer of Proverbs says this, if you set your heart on trying to be wise, if you set your heart on trying to get ahead in life and trying to make life work and trying to not waste your life, you'll waste your life.

But if you set your heart on centering your life on Jesus and the gospel, you will find that actually you will be wise. In the New Testament, the book of Colossians, Paul writes this and he says, in Jesus Christ are hidden, that's an important word, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Now Paul's not saying if you're not a Christian you can't be smart, right? Okay? He's not saying only Christians are smart people. There's some people that are very smart and they wouldn't profess faith in Christ.

[38 : 19] Some of you are here this morning. But what he is saying is this, that the key to unlocking the secrets to life, this key to unlocking the vaults of the treasures of wisdom are not found by simply observing life around you.

It's not found by simply observing life under the sun. It's found in coming to the one, the author and the designer of life. It's found in coming to the one who created life.

This key to unlocking the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are actually found and coming to the one who made you and who created you and knows the purpose for your life.

Jesus Christ being the author of life will show you how life was meant to be lived. Not according to just the natural wisdom of this world but according to an altogether different kind of wisdom. A wisdom that is not found in life under the sun but found beyond the sun.

We tend to think that it's the strong and the powerful and the beautiful that are successful in life. And Jesus is blessed are the poor and the weak and the meek and the poor in spirit and the merciful.

[39 : 31] We tend to think that honor and respect and long life are the signs of a good life. And Jesus is serving others and being humble are actually the signs of greatness. We tend to think that those who accumulate great wealth are the blessed ones.

And Jesus says it's more blessed to give away than to receive. We tend to think that it's those who have a big following and a great name and are esteemed that are the great ones in our generation.

And Jesus says he whoever humbles himself like a child is the greatest in the kingdom. Friends, Jesus says that the wisdom that you gain by observing life under the sun, the wisdom that our teacher finds by listening to TED talks and podcasts, it's not wrong, it's not pointless, it's not sinful, but it's not enough.

It does not help you. It may help you to get ahead in life, it may help you to focus on life, but ultimately you can still get ahead in life and be a fool because it won't help you to discover the true answers to life's biggest questions.

And so Jesus actually solves the answers that wisdom poses. But not only that, Jesus also solves the problem of death because Jesus died and rose again.

[40 : 44] The teacher says there's only one thing in this world that you can be absolutely certain of. All of us are going to die and then after that, who knows? You can't be certain of anything beyond the grave.

But Jesus Christ died and rose again so that those who come to him, those who trust him, those who put their faith in him, truly can be certain of life in this world and of the world to come.

And how do you know that? Because under the hill of Calvary, there is a tomb and that tomb is empty.

Friends, there are many things in this world that you cannot be certain of. There are many unpredictable things in life. But there are some things you can be certain of. You can be absolutely certain that Jesus Christ loves you because he went to the cross for you.

He died on the cross for you. He shed his blood for you. He took the nail-scarred hands to go to the cross for you. You can be absolutely certain of his love for you. You can be absolutely certain that if you are in Christ, he has not abandoned you.

[41 : 51] He has not forsaken you. In Jesus Christ, he went to the cross and he died there, but he didn't remain there. He rose from the grave. He rose. He is ascended into heaven and in heaven now, he is interceding for those who are in Christ.

Friends, Jesus Christ was abandoned on the cross so that you will never be abandoned. Jesus Christ died like a fool, as Niels reminded us a few weeks ago, so that fools like you and I don't need to live in our folly, but can discover the wisdom.

Friends, Jesus Christ went to the cross so you can be absolutely certain that beyond death, there is life beyond the grave. Jesus rose again so that your hope is not only in this life.

The Bible describes Jesus as a poor, wise man who came not just to save his village, but to save all of humanity, all those who would trust in him, all those who would surrender to him.

Friends, let's not be like the village in this parable who rejected and despised the wisdom of that poor, wise man. Jesus Christ came to save those who would trust in him.

[43 : 06] And so let's take heed of his wisdom. Let's bank our lives on him. Let's surrender to him. Let's center our lives on him. And as we do that, we will find the wisdom to truly make life work.

We will find the wisdom how not to waste our lives. We will find the wisdom to, we will find the skill of making life work if we will center our lives on Jesus.

promises. But not only that, we will defeat death. We will escape the one great enemy that none of us can escape on our own. We will take hold of life and life everlasting.

Friends, human wisdom is good, but it's limited. Because life is unpredictable, and ultimately it cannot save you from the inevitability of death. And while death is the great equalizer of humanity, there is another equalizer, the cross of Christ that invites all of us, sinners though we are, to come and find hope and fresh life in him.

Friends, Jesus died and rose again. Then we don't need to die in our foolishness, but that we can take hold of life and take hold of his wisdom. And so this week, as you go into your week, as you go to the office, as you go to holiday, as you parent your children, as you look after your aged parents, as you pursue a relationship or you try and reconcile to a broken relationship, as you mourn the death of a loved one or a friend, friends, don't just seek wisdom, don't just try and make life work, seek Jesus, the author of life, the author of wisdom, the one who really did die and rose again so that we may find life.

[44 : 52] Let's seek not wisdom in our own lives, but Jesus, who is wisdom. Let's pray together. Maybe actually before I pray, let me just give us a few moments to respond on our own in quiet.

In his word, God calls us to not center our lives on trying to make life work, but to center our lives on Jesus, who will give us the wisdom to make life work.

How's Jesus asking us to respond to him today? Amen. What will it look like for you to center your life on Jesus this week?

Maybe I can ask you, what is the one area in your life that you try to live by your own wisdom?

For many of us, the temptations, we'll say, I'll surrender everything to Jesus, but there's this one area in my life I don't want to let go of control. Friends, that's the one area where we'll probably be most foolish.

[46 : 45] What's the one area of your life Jesus wants you to come and center on him? Amen. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, we bring our lives before you.

In particular, we bring the areas of our life this morning that we find so hard to bring before you. Father, where we are tempted to live by our own wisdom, we confess that often we lead ourselves into foolishness.

We have a trail of brokenness behind us. So Christ, we come before you this morning, and we ask you, come and have your way in our life.

Come and be our King. Come and be our Lord. Come and be our Master. Come and be our Lord. Jesus, come and lead our lives, and give us the wisdom, God, to not waste our lives, but to make our lives flourish.

[48 : 23] By centering our lives in you, come and help us, we pray. God, where we lack faith, where we find it hard, won't you help us to trust you? Where we fear for God, won't you come and draw us near.

Where we are anxious and worried, Jesus, come and bring your peace, and help us to trust you, we pray. In your great and gracious name, amen.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

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