

Victory of the Lamb – Seeing 2020 –

Proverbs 2:1-12 - Pursuing Wisdom – Pastor Bill Limmer

Back before Xbox and Playstation, back before Wii and Atari, there were all these games we played outside that actually took physical exertion and effort. One of my favorite games was a variation of tag known as Freeze Tag. In Freeze Tag, whenever the one who is it tagged someone they had to freeze in place and were out of the game unless someone who wasn't it came and tagged them and then they were back in the game. The game was over after everyone was frozen. It was a game of strategy, fun, and pursuit.

Today we are continuing our series on the wisdom of God called *Seeing 2020*. Last week Pastor Ben opened up Scripture and led us to see that the fear of the Lord is beginning of wisdom. To be in awe of who God is, what He has done, is doing, and will do in grace and power. Today we are going to look at pursuing the wisdom of God.

The good news is the wisdom of God is readily available. It calls out to each of us day by day. Proverbs 8:1-4 **Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? 2At the highest point along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; 3beside the gate leading into the city, at the entrance, she cries aloud: 4“To you, O people, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind.** All this to say, wisdom is not a scarce commodity. It is available and it is available to all.

The other piece of good news is we all want to be wise. I don't know of anyone who wants to keep making mistakes, keep failing, keep struggling. We all want wisdom. Wisdom for our relationships, wisdom for our finances, wisdom for our day to day and long-term decisions. We all want to be wise, so the question is: are you pursuing wisdom?

I ask the question because there are wisdom wreckers that want us to TAP out. The first one is Time. Here is what I have noticed in my life and in the life of others that I have counseled with and do life with: we think we don't have time because we pack our schedules to the margins. But it is really not a matter of time; it is a matter of priority. Psalm 90:12 **Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**

Another wisdom wrecker is apathy. We are so richly blessed by God that we have allowed ourselves to see the blessings of God as more important in our life than God. And as long as we have the blessings, we think we are good to go. And so we interpret that to mean there is no reason to pursue wisdom.

Wisdom wrecker number 3 is Fear. We are afraid God is going to ask to do something or stop doing some things. That is actually wise. But understand God is going to give us the power to do those things or stop doing the things we need to.

And finally there is Pride. We don't think we need wisdom. I already know all those Bible stories or at least some of them. I think I am basically a good person.

There are these wisdom wreckers. So again I ask: Are you pursuing Jesus and his wisdom today? And here is why that is an important question. Proverbs 3:13-16 **Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, ¹⁴for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. ¹⁵She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. ¹⁶Long life is in her right**

hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. We have a remarkable ability to try to get things that wisdom offers, like long life and riches and honor, without searching out wisdom. We want the benefits of wisdom without having to do the work of wisdom.

So how do you pursue wisdom? Do you just decide one day that you're going to muster up the wisdom you need? Do you make a New Year's resolution to be wise? No! This is the difference between knowledge and wisdom: Knowledge comes from education. Wisdom comes from God. To get knowledge, you look around. To get wisdom, you look up to God in prayer and you look to God's Word.

For me, pursuing wisdom looks like this: Before I get out of bed in the morning, I pray. Most morning I pray for the Holy Spirit to give me guidance in my life and a plea to God as a sinful human being to create in me a clean heart O God, renew a right spirit within me. Cast not away from your presence, take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. Upheld by your free spirit. And I conclude with Lord's Prayer and the blessings from the NT and OT. I need God. That's why I do this.

I get up, make a cup of coffee, and read my devotions which right now consists of Daily Devotions, a Bible reading plan, and a plan on memorizing Scripture. I do this so I can fill my mind with God's grace and God's direction for my life. I need to be reminded and grow every day. I then go on a run. On my run I listen to podcasts of other wise leaders talk about Scripture, application of Scripture, and strategy. I do this so that I can learn from some of the best.

When I get home, I take a shower and as I take a shower, I am remembering my baptism, that Christ has covered me, the Christ lives in me, that I can share Christ with others. And then I am blessed throughout the day to bounce ideas off my co-workers. And then before I go to bed, I have a devotion, and close the day off with prayer. I need God in my life.

In other words, there are two ways to pursue wisdom and we need them both to get wisdom. Wisdom's task is the ask. **The task of the ask is prayer.** Don't rely on yourself. Rely on God. James 1:5 says, **If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously** (begrudgingly - no) **to all without finding fault, and it will be given** (withheld from you - no) **to you.** We can pray in confidence because prayer is about being a kid and going to your daddy who loves you.

I know that some of you have had dads that are or have been or are absent, abusive, but God is not like any earthly father. He is even way better than the greatest earthly fathers because he has no flaws. As a two-year old comes walking in with toy in his hand that he can't figure out and hands it to his father to fix so we can go to our father and hand him all of struggles, issues, hurts, dreams all of ourselves in trust. When you realize that prayer is not a waste of time or wishful thinking but it the greatest use of time so that you are praying fervently you know you are hot with wisdom. One another thing that I hope give you encouragement. Jesus thought enough of prayer that he prayed for you. The task of the ask. God is ready for your prayers 24/7.

The other to key to pursuing wisdom is **getting hooked on the book.** Proverbs 2:1-6 (Wisdom is talking) **My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,** ²**turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—** ³**indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,** ⁴**and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,** ⁵**then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.** ⁶**For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.** God's Word is a gift, but it won't do us any good if we

don't receive the gift, open the gift, and use the gift. Like a gift we don't know what it is until we open it up. If it is a key to car, it doesn't do us any good unless we put it into the ignition.

God's word is not just informative it is transformative. We must get into God's Word and let God's Word get into us. The more verses we memorize and live out, the more our thinking will align with His truth. When we spend time with God and learn what he loves and hates, that affects our hearts. We begin to cultivate the same passions. We develop a distaste for pride, deception, violence and scheming, and we develop an affection for what he loves, including his people and his mission. A heart that beats with God's inevitably generates thoughts and actions consistent with God's heart. Pursue God and his wisdom as passionately as you would hunt for a hidden treasure.

Here is an example of pursuing. When I coached basketball at Lakeland College, we had a walk-on who didn't play high school basketball and he couldn't have played high school basketball because he just wasn't very good at all. But you know what, every day, and I do mean every day, he came out and gave it his best even though at first his best wasn't very good. He listened well and practiced hard. And as the year progressed, he became better and better. And by the end of the year, we couldn't keep him off the court. He was that good because he pursued something he wanted.

As one of your pastors, I'm going to be real with you. As you practice the spiritual disciplines of the task of the ask and getting hooked on the book, it is going to take time. You will have to stop doing something that you are presently doing to make time to do this.

Here is what you can expect to find when you are reading God's Word. 1) Expect Satan to want to distract you. Have you ever gone to bed guilty or unfulfilled because you just watched The Office on Netflix for the umpteenth time? Or because you watched the Sports Center three times in a row. Or because you watched the news but you already knew what they were going to say because you had watched a previous newscast? Now you know who is behind the distraction.

2) Expect to be shocked by the sin you read about. The Bible is about real life. It doesn't sugar coat what happened. For example, the Flood was horrific, way more devastating than any hurricane we have seen. This is not to pretend that the hurricanes we have experienced are not life altering, and life taking catastrophic events. It is just to say, the Bible is real. It is graphic.

Expect that you aren't going to get all the answers you want. Some things are just for God.

Expect to meet the white-hot holy God. Expect to see the brilliance and glory of Christ.

Expect the Bible to show your sin. The Bible show your Savior. The Bible applies to our entire life so expect to be transformed, to be changed, to be set free, to have your faith strengthened, expect peace, expect wisdom. **2 Timothy 3:15-17 the Holy Scriptures . . . are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God^[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work., John 20:31, these are written that you may believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

And as you read the Bible you will find joy in the strength of the Lord, you will find shocking forgiveness for yourself and shocking forgiveness for your enemy, you will find a love that loves the unlovable in you and in others, will find mercy for the messed up you and the messed up other. You will find the goal is

not to please people but to honor God. You will find the wisdom of God in the cross of Jesus. You will find strength to pick up your own cross and follow Jesus in every earthly setting, and that will lead you right out of your own earthly tomb into heaven. When you are pursuing God's wisdom like a hidden treasure what you will find that God is pursuing you. Psalm 23:6 **Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life and I dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

, a bunch of us will be using the YouVersion Bible app to go through the whole Bible in a year. This app will allow us to interact with each other, answering questions and supporting one another. You are all welcomed to join. If you aren't in, yet jump in. Give it a try. There is a link available for you to get involved at **votl.life Biblical Storyline Card** In addition, we have assembled a Bible reading team to support and encourage you to keep walking through the Bible for a whole year. Let's pursue God's wisdom this year together and see the difference it makes in our hearts, homes, community and world.

Here's the thing. If you are in the group and you miss a day, a week, or whatever just jump back in on the reading for that day. No guilt. Just pick up and move on. Here's the thing, if you don't join the Biblical Storyline group, I encourage you to pray and read God's word every day. And if you miss a day, a week or whatever. Just pick up and move on. No guilt. This is not a report card. It is simply a way to join in the pursuit of the God who is pursuing you.