

Epiphany 4 – January 29, 2023
Text: 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31
Theme: Keep Your Fork

The readings today all talk one way or another about the wisdom of God. We need God’s wisdom, because we live in a dangerous world that has so many conflicting ideas swirling around us that, at times, it seems difficult to stand upright. We need a plumb line to tell us what is true and what is skewed. So, we lean on God, and we look to him and through His Word to give us the strength we need to get through all the danger and temptations that assault us.

First, remember that there is a huge difference between wisdom and knowledge. If we confuse those two terms, we begin to believe that all options are acceptable if they make logical sense. For instance, if my wife and I are not getting along very well, and neither one of us is very happy in our relationship, and no one is depending on us for parenting, it just makes logical sense for us to divorce. Why should two people stay married if they are not happy? Knowledge dictates this course of action, but wisdom does not. That is why we see an astounding rate of divorce in people over 60 these days. It turns out that what kept Grandpa and Grandma together for 60 years was not knowledge but because they were immersed in the wisdom of God. The interesting thing is that the divorce rate is down among the people under 30...not because they are any wiser but because they aren’t getting married. They just live together because

knowledge of the likelihood of divorce says that it makes no logical sense to legally tie up your assets and your future based on something as transitory as feelings! So, just live together until the feelings subside and then make a nice clean break and move on to another relationship.

All the above is based on knowledge. It is based on what we know to be true about human beings, about relationships, about feelings of love and romance. And if we base marriage on knowledge, the vast majority of us would change spouses every few years. Wisdom, on the other hand, comes from God. King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 2:6,

“For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding...” In other words, the only infallible knowledge flows from the wisdom of God. St. Paul says in our epistle today,

“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.”

What God says is wise, and anything that conflicts with what God says is folly. When I say to you, “God will provide,” I am not mouthing a pious platitude to make you feel better about whatever you are lacking for the moment. I am saying that God has promised to provide everything we

need in this life, and I believe Him. It is wise to believe God even when the knowledge we have from the world may contradict what He says. If you read through the Gospel, you see a list of Godly ideals that completely conflict with worldly knowledge. Look at the Gospel for today: poor, hungry, meek, merciful? These are not qualities that get you ahead in this world. These are qualities that people strive to attain AFTER they have “made it” in the world and want to feel better about themselves. I may have ignored my children, cheated the government and back-stabbed my co-workers to get all this success, so now I will give to a charity so that I can feel better about all the sin I committed to get to the top of the heap.

God’s wisdom says to trust in Him. What does the Lord require of you? “...to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” That’s it. This is just Micah’s summary of the 10 Commandments. Follow the 10 Commandments as faithfully as you are able and He will take care of the rest. It is wise to believe that. The 10 Commandments are pure wisdom and Micah’s admonition to “do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God,” is the summary. It is not smart from a worldly point of view because it involves sacrifice and sometimes even personal suffering, but it is nevertheless wise. It is also an amazing gift to us.

By dying on the cross for our sins, God bought us eternal life. Therefore, our lives do not consist of whatever we gain or lose in this

world. We have life forever, and regardless of how great or how miserable our life thus far has been, the best part of our life is yet to come. I love the old story about a grandma who instructed the mortician to put a fork in her hand for the viewing of her body in the casket. He thought it was strange but he did as he was asked when the time came. When the children and grandchildren gathered around the casket to view Grandma, they all started giggling. Grandma had been a fantastic cook and her specialty was dessert. She made extravagant desserts for every big family meal, and her mantra throughout her life was this. When she cleared away the dishes after a big family dinner, she always told everyone to keep their fork because the best was yet to come. As she lay in her casket, she had kept her fork, because she knew that the best was yet to come. Grandma had never finished high school. Grandma had never read Tolstoy. Grandma never traveled the world. But Grandma had faithfully read her Bible, attended worship, and received the Holy Sacrament, and Grandma was wise beyond any room full of scholars. Her last act was to witness this wisdom by keeping her fork because the best was yet to come.