

**Sunday August 16, 2020**

## **Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church**

### **Welcome & Prayer (Steve Mc)**

Welcome everyone to our service this morning, whether you are here at Church with us this morning, or at home watching or reading the paper service, it is wonderful to be able to take time out to praise our almighty Lord. For as it says in Psalm 34: *I will extol the Lord at all times, his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.*

Now, one of the things that I wished I had when I was growing up, was the Internet. Isn't the Internet a wonderful thing? If you have any questions, or are looking for any information, then you can simply 'Google it' and find the answers. But even though the internet can give us the answers to even the most obscure questions, such as 'what is the most popular colour of toilet paper in France?' – by the way it's pink – one thing that it can't give us is wisdom. What is wisdom? Where do we find wisdom? And, how do we get wisdom? Well, when Stephen preaches to us later this morning from the book of Job, he will speak to us as to how we can find all the wisdom that we need to live a full life.

But now, please join with me in **prayer**. *"Our Heavenly Father, we marvel at your majesty. We praise you with our hearts, minds and souls, for nothing can compare to you. You are almighty, and powerful, you created the heavens and the earth, and everything between. You will reign forever, will judge the world in righteousness, and govern the people with justice. But Lord, you are a loving and merciful God. You are slow to anger and full of compassion. And because of your great love for us, you sent us your Son Jesus Christ, who came to earth and took the punishment that we deserve. For we know that we have sinned against you Lord, we have angered you with our thoughts, with our words, and with our actions. We have been greedy and selfish, and we seek to rely on our own abilities, rather than putting our trust in you. We don't always look out for others, and most importantly, we do not always put you first in everything that we do. For this, Lord, we are truly sorry, and we ask for your forgiveness.*

*We thank you though, for the saving grace of Jesus Christ. We thank you that through Jesus' death and resurrection, he has paid the price for our sins. We thank you that whilst we deserve to be put to death and set apart from you for eternity because of our sins, that Jesus took this punishment upon himself. We thank you that Jesus has restored our relationship with you, that we have been made righteous, and are now able to be with you for eternity. We pray Lord that you will help us to turn away from our sinful lives, help us to live righteous lives, and to always put you first in our lives. Lord, help us to be shining lights so that others may come to see your wonderful glory. And we ask all of this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**Songs – How Great is Our God** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKLQ1td3MbE>

**All Glory, Laud and Honour** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3a8fTTrAdE>

### **Bible Reading – Job 28:1-28**

*There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. <sup>2</sup> Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore. <sup>3</sup> Mortals put an end to the darkness; they search out the farthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness. <sup>4</sup> Far from human dwellings they cut a shaft, in places untouched by human feet; far from other people they dangle and sway. <sup>5</sup> The earth, from which food comes, is transformed below as by fire; <sup>6</sup> lapis lazuli comes from its rocks, and its dust contains nuggets of gold. <sup>7</sup> No bird of prey knows that hidden path, no falcon's eye has seen it. <sup>8</sup> Proud beasts do not set foot on it, and no lion prowls there. <sup>9</sup> People assault the flinty rock with their hands and lay bare the roots of the mountains. <sup>10</sup> They tunnel*

through the rock; their eyes see all its treasures. <sup>11</sup> They search<sup>[a]</sup> the sources of the rivers and bring hidden things to light. <sup>12</sup> But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?

<sup>13</sup> No mortal comprehends its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living. <sup>14</sup> The deep says, "It is not in me"; the sea says, "It is not with me." <sup>15</sup> It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed out in silver. <sup>16</sup> It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or lapis lazuli. <sup>17</sup> Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold. <sup>18</sup> Coral & jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies. <sup>19</sup> The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it; it cannot be bought with pure gold. <sup>20</sup> Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?

<sup>21</sup> It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds in the sky. <sup>22</sup> Destruction & Death say, "Only a rumour of it has reached our ears." <sup>23</sup> God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, <sup>24</sup> for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. <sup>25</sup> When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters, <sup>26</sup> when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm, <sup>27</sup> then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it. <sup>28</sup> And he said to the human race, "The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding."

## Announcements

- **Church Services this term.** Thanks so much for all those who are registering for our services and for those who are telling us they are not yet ready to come back to our services. Thanks to those who are working hard in cleaning and disinfecting. Thanks to those who have offered to help out in many ways. And a special thanks to Marissa who has offered to co-ordinate the attendance lists for our two Charlestown AM services to allow Stephen to take Saturday off. This will be a massive help for Stephen. So, if on a Saturday your circumstances change and you want to come to Church or you can no longer come to Church please contact Marissa (preferably by text) on 0498 250 129
- **Face masks.** Currently the NSW State government strongly recommended that people wear Face masks if they attend places of worship but stopped short from saying you had to wear face masks. We would strongly recommend that you do wear Face masks in church at the current time. There will be some washable facemasks available from the back of the Church if you would like one.
- **Focus for August – Hospitality.** Are there ways you can be hospitable with others. Either in your home or at a coffee shop? Going for cuppa or a walk? To talk or to pray? In this time when we want to be careful with social isolation, we want to continue to be in engaged in Christian fellowship.
- **Grief Seminar.** We are planning to run a seminar on Grief on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August from 2-3:45pm at the Charlestown Church. We will think about the characteristics of grief, coping with grief, supporting others through grief and we will interview one of our people about what has helped them in their grief. Ruth Myers, Jo Barlow and Stephen Taylor will all contribute. Let Jo know if you would like to come.
- **Youth Led Service.** The next youth led service will be TONIGHT at 6pm.
- **Prayer meetings.** Don't forget we run two weekly ZOOM prayer meetings on Monday at 8pm and Thursday at 7pm. If you can't attend by ZOOM why not pray yourself or ring someone and pray together?

## Kids Talk – QUIZ WORX

Or Singing and Humming

<https://youtu.be/G75qGFJY1hU>

## Song – Christian's Daily Prayer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAK2SaKQ1NQ>

## Pastoral Prayer (Jen Mulready)

Heavenly Father we thank you for the many ways in which you look after us. We thank you that you have made Christ known to us, that you live within us thru the HS, that you have given us your word thru the bible. We thank you for the ways in which you sustain us- that we can have fellowship and genuine friendship with other believers in our church, that you provide for our physical needs.

### Local

Thankyou that we have been able to meet together as a church physically over the past 6 weeks. We thank you for the people who have put lots of time into enabling this to happen such as our ministry team and our management committee. We pray that you would help us to be wise in implementing meeting together and be patient and flexible with the necessary changes that may occur as our nation deals with COVID 19. Please help our congregations to be loving towards other and to reach out for opportunities to safely fellowship together. We pray in particular for those in our congregation who are unable or not feeling ready to return to physical meetings. Please help them to continue to engage in our online services and to be willing to return to meeting up physically when they feel able. Help us to care for those who have not returned yet to physical meetings.

### Australia

We pray for our nations' health workers as they provide much of the response for COVID19. We pray for ongoing protection from the virus. We pray for physical safety- please help organisations to recognise that adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) is essential, we pray for wisdom in sourcing appropriate PPE and we pray for wisdom for workers to recognise the appropriate use of PPE and safe technique in removing contaminated equipment. We pray for the day to day realities and frustrations of people as they go about their work, in particular we pray for our aged care facilities where the impact of no visitors is disheartening and frustrating to all involved whether it be the resident, the staff or the families. We thank you for the response of health workers who have relocated to fill in much needed support in hotspots and pray that you will continue to uphold them.

We continue to pray for our other frontline workers such police, educators, cleaners, supermarket staff. We pray for safety, patience, flexibility, creativity as they do their work. We pray for those who have lost employment or face potential job loss through this pandemic that they won't feel defined by their loss of employment and that they would be able to provide for their basic needs. We pray for those who are fearful and anxious, that they will remember that you are Lord of all. We pray for those amongst us managing strange school/ parenting/work situations- for patience, humour, forgiveness and joy.

Thank you for the gospel work the Webbs are involved in, training and equipping Aboriginal Christians based thru the People's Church at Broome. We pray for wisdom in knowing how to engage and encourage Aboriginal Christians to grow in their trust of Jesus and boldness to trust in his word. We pray that you will continue to raise up godly Aboriginal Christians who want to teach the bible and be leaders in the Kimberley churches. We pray for the practical realities for the Webbs in how to support those to whom they minister with compassion, integrity, genuine friendship and love.

### International

Father we bring before you in prayer the nation of Mauritania in West Africa- where Islam has been entrenched for over a 1000 years with little challenge. All Mauritanian peoples remain essentially unreached and the vast majority have yet to hear the good news of God's grace through faith in Jesus. With a society increasingly dominated by Islamic extremism, the very few that know Jesus face significant personal, economic and religious persecution. It is seen as a betrayal of tribe, family and society to be a Christian and may even lead to loss of citizenship. Those who are believers often do so in secret. We pray for these very vulnerable believers in Mauritania- we pray for your protection over them in serving their physical needs and safety, we pray that more will come to hear your gospel through their powerful witness, that seekers would encounter Jesus though the cost may be high. We pray especially for scattered

Mauritanians who live in others lands (as refugees) that they may encounter the good news of God's faith through Jesus and the genuine love of Christian believers. Amen

## Bible Reading - Job 33:1-30 (NIV)

*"But now, Job, listen to my words; pay attention to everything I say. <sup>2</sup> I am about to open my mouth; my words are on the tip of my tongue. <sup>3</sup> My words come from an upright heart; my lips sincerely speak what I know. <sup>4</sup> The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life. <sup>5</sup> Answer me then, if you can; stand up and argue your case before me. <sup>6</sup> I am the same as you in God's sight; I too am a piece of clay. <sup>7</sup> No fear of me should alarm you, nor should my hand be heavy on you. <sup>8</sup> "But you have said in my hearing—I heard the very words— <sup>9</sup> 'I am pure, I have done no wrong; I am clean and free from sin. <sup>10</sup> Yet God has found fault with me; he considers me his enemy. <sup>11</sup> He fastens my feet in shackles; he keeps close watch on all my paths.'*

*<sup>12</sup> "But I tell you, in this you are not right, for God is greater than any mortal. <sup>13</sup> Why do you complain to him that he responds to no one's words? <sup>14</sup> For God does speak—now one way, now another— though no one perceives it. <sup>15</sup> In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they slumber in their beds, <sup>16</sup> he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, <sup>17</sup> to turn them from wrongdoing and keep them from pride, <sup>18</sup> to preserve them from the pit, their lives from perishing by the sword. <sup>19</sup> "Or someone may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in their bones, <sup>20</sup> so that their body finds food repulsive and their soul loathes the choicest meal. <sup>21</sup> Their flesh wastes away to nothing, and their bones, once hidden, now stick out. <sup>22</sup> They draw near to the pit, and their life to the messengers of death. <sup>23</sup> Yet if there is an angel at their side, a messenger, one out of a thousand, sent to tell them how to be upright, <sup>24</sup> and he is gracious to that person and says to God, 'Spare them from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for them— <sup>25</sup> let their flesh be renewed like a child's; let them be restored as in the days of their youth'— <sup>26</sup> then that person can pray to God and find favour with him, they will see God's face and shout for joy; he will restore them to full well-being. <sup>27</sup> And they will go to others and say, 'I have sinned, I have perverted what is right, but I did not get what I deserved. <sup>28</sup> God has delivered me from going down to the pit, and I shall live to enjoy the light of life.'*

*<sup>29</sup> "God does all these things to a person— twice, even three times—<sup>30</sup> to turn them back from the pit, that the light of life may shine on them. <sup>31</sup> "Pay attention, Job, and listen to me; be silent, and I will speak. <sup>32</sup> If you have anything to say, answer me; speak up, for I want to vindicate you. <sup>33</sup> But if not, then listen to me; be silent, and I will teach you wisdom."*

## Sermon – Looking for wisdom – Stephen Taylor

<https://youtu.be/VTUmHP7aoLc>

Sometimes it's good to have a change. For if you are like me, we often we get stuck in a rut. Our days become too predictable & a change can be the breath of fresh air that we desperately need. So instead of staying at home working we take the dog for a walk. Instead of eating at home every night, we go out to a restaurant. After slogging it out at school or work or even in Church we take a holiday. We clear our head. Freshen up somewhat. Get a new perspective. And that new perspective gives us fresh energy and purpose to go back to our regular routines.

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After 27 chapters of Job and his friends going hammer and tongs over the cause of Job's suffering, we need a break from its intensity. We need some fresh air. A new perspective. So, it's time for a change. And so, the writer of the book of Job changes gears somewhat. He gives us a chance to take a step back. To have a breather. And a new question begins to bubble to the surface. The issue raised is no longer Why? Why is Job suffering? But where, where are we going to find the answers to such a question? Where are we going to find the wisdom that you and I need to make sense of living in a world that is full of suffering?

So, we are introduced to two new points of view. In chapters 32-37, a young man Elihu will emerge from the shadows and change the whole debate. And in chapter 28, in the middle of nowhere we get a poem most likely from the author himself about Wisdom and where we can find the answers to any of our questions. So that is where we are going to turn next, starting with Elihu who wants to open our eyes to

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### 1. Spirit Wisdom

Let's see how it all comes about. 32:1 *"So these three men stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. <sup>2</sup> But Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God. <sup>3</sup> He was also angry with the three friends because they had found no way to refute Job & yet had condemned him."*

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Elihu starts his 6 chapters of argument by talking about where to get wisdom. *"So Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite said: 'I am young in years & you are old; that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know. <sup>7</sup> I thought, 'Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.' <sup>8</sup> But it is the spirit in a person, the breath of the Almighty that gives them understanding."* Wisdom doesn't come from age or experience but from God's revelation.

Job's three friends had argued their case from tradition, what always happened in the past or science what the world around us taught us or even from mysticism or theology. But Elihu is saying that God's Spirit is the one who leads us to wisdom. The Almighty can breathe into people his own breath, his own Spirit and that can lead them to the answers to our world's deepest questions. In fact, Elihu claims to have this spirit of God.

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And so, using God's wisdom he seeks to respond to some of the arguments that Job has raised throughout the book. Firstly, that God is not just. We looked at that question last week as we thought through the statement that Job and his friends all agreed upon. We reap what we sow. The friends said, will look at what Job has reaped he must have sowed evil. But Job countered by saying I haven't sowed evil so God is unjust in sending me all the bad stuff I have had to go through.

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And calling God unjust has made Elihu angry, very angry. Listen to what he says in chapter 13:8 *"But you have said in my hearing— I heard the very words— <sup>9</sup> 'I am pure, I have done no wrong; I am clean and free from sin. <sup>10</sup> Yet God has found fault with me; he considers me his enemy. <sup>11</sup> He fastens my feet in shackles; he keeps close watch on all my paths.' <sup>12</sup> **"But I tell you, in this you are not right, for God is greater than any mortal."***

Job you are plainly wrong. God has not targeted Job unfairly. He hasn't treated Job as his enemy. And secondly Job has claimed that God is silent to his pleas, well that is not true either, Elihu says.

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*"Why do you complain to him that he responds to no one's words? <sup>14</sup> For God does speak—now one way, now another— though no one perceives it. <sup>15</sup> In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they slumber in their beds, <sup>16</sup> he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, <sup>17</sup> to turn them from wrongdoing and keep them from pride, <sup>18</sup> to preserve them from the pit, their lives from perishing by the sword."*

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God does reveal himself in lots of ways in fact. In dreams, in visions why he even speaks in suffering. *"Or someone may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in their bones... <sup>22</sup> They draw near to the pit & their life to the messengers of death."* Elihu tells Job that God is speaking to him through your pain, the question is are you listening to him?

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Because He wants to save you. He wants to help you avoid death. Job, God is not silent, he is speaking so sit up and take notice. And lastly, he has not abandoned you. *“Yet if there is an angel at their side, a messenger, one out of a thousand, sent to tell them how to be upright,<sup>24</sup> and he is gracious to that person and says to God, ‘Spare them from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for them—<sup>25</sup> let their flesh be renewed like a child’s; let them be restored as in the days of their youth’—<sup>26</sup> then that person can pray to God and find favour with him, they will see God’s face and shout for joy; he will restore them to full well-being.”*

God sends his people angels. God provides a mediator, a redeemer for his followers. Job you are not alone. God is listening to what you are saying, he is providing you with a mediator as we speak and God will certainly make sure you get justice. But Job be careful how you speak. Make sure you don’t misrepresent your God. And it is like Elihu is disagreeing with the friends when they said Job is suffering because he was a sinner. Instead he is saying Job is sinning because of his suffering. His pain has tempted him to see God as unjust and as his enemy when even in the midst of his pain God is still with him.

Now I think that is really helpful. Job’s suffering wasn’t a punishment for past sinful actions, Job 1 & 2 makes it clear he was a godly man. But in his suffering, Job now has a choice to listen to the word of God or turn his back on the word of God.

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Isn’t that what CS Lewis is saying when he says, *“the human spirit will not even begin to try and surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well... we can rest contentedly in our sins... But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience but shouts in our pain. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”*

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When God speaks to us, he wants us repent and believe in Him. He wants to do his work of discipline in his children. He wants us to learn the deep lessons that only those who trust in Him fully will ever learn. In the words of Simone Weil, *“The extreme greatness of Christianity lies in the fact that it does not seek a supernatural remedy for suffering, but a supernatural use for it.”*

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And Jesus makes the same point with the man born blind in John 9, remember his disciples came across this man and said “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” Jesus, you reap what you sow so whose fault is this man’s blindness? And Jesus says “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”

You get it? God is speaking to this man in his blindness and asking him not to be bitter but to be open to what God wants to do in his life. And a similar truth comes to us in Luke 13 when a tower falls on some Galileans and people wonder is this suffering as a result of their sin. Jesus say *“I tell you, but unless you repent you too will all perish!”* Wake up Jesus is saying. Suffering speaks to those who suffer and those who look on at that suffering. And it is saying to all of us, repent. Believe. Trust God not just in the good times but in the tough times.

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This is a breath of fresh air in the midst of the issue of suffering. Don’t just look back and ask why. Look forward at what God wants us to do about it. Listen to what God is saying to us. He is revealing himself all the time. Yes, sometimes that revelation isn’t easy to comprehend. A car accident, a bush fire strikes, a health crisis comes near and it never seems to have a note attached *“Dear friend, here’s COVID-19. Please remember to serve me better in the future.”* But God is always speaking to us. So, go back to his word, remember the gospel of grace, repent and believe in Jesus. That’s what Spirit wisdom wants to say to us.

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Now Elihu has a lot more to say that just that. And some of what he says is also helpful and some doesn’t seem very helpful at all. And he does it in an angry way, a pompous way, an arrogant way. So much so that

Christians mostly right him off as an unwanted distraction. And last time I preached on Job I thought that way myself. But the author has included him for a reason. Wisdom he is saying is not just about looking back, it's about looking forward.

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## **2. Spirit Wisdom and Suffering Wisdom (chapters 29-31)**

But I find it very interesting that Elihu's argument comes hot on the tail of Job's final defence. For after the debate with his three friends collapses in chap 27 Job makes one final appeal to God to answer his case. He reflects on the good life he has before his suffering came. He ponders the pain that have now taken a hold of his life. And he asks God to deliver his verdict. If I am guilty then punish me. But if I am innocent give me the justice I deserve.

You see Elihu is saying wisdom is about looking forward at what God wants us to do and his friends have been saying Wisdom is about looking back and learning from the past and Job is still saying wisdom is about looking within. And that is the problem that Job has got himself into. Elihu is right, he didn't sin prior to his suffering but in his suffering his world has closed in on him. He has become tunnel visioned. Stuck in a rut. Only able to see his innocence and God's lack of justice.

And this is one of the terrible effects of suffering. It is that our perspective turns inwards and we become more and more aware of our own pain and less aware of anything else that is going on in the world. In those times when we loom so very large, God is diminished and it's easy to begin to think wrongly about Him.

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Many people say that the most important lessons they have learnt have been in the school of hard knocks. And it is true that Job has learned some valuable lessons there so far. There is a source of wisdom that we find when we look within. Something is seared onto our consciousness when the tough times set up camp in your life. But we don't find wisdom automatically in suffering. We don't learn the lesson of the school of hard knocks just by attending it. Some people do very dumb things while they suffer.

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In his book "In God's waiting room", Lehman Strauss learned firsthand about affliction and the pain of helplessness when his wife Elsie, suffers a severe stroke. He knew God intellectually before the stroke. He learnt more by living through this practical experience. But his conclusion was that it is only when that pain draws someone nearer to God, can that suffering truly lead someone to wisdom, true wisdom.

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## **3. Spirit Wisdom, Suffering Wisdom and thirdly Sovereign Wisdom**

For prior to Elihu's speeches and Job's final defence we find ourselves in Job 28, a chapter that stands out from all the other chapters before and after it. In the midst of all the arguments, the raised voices, the shouts demanding to be heard and the pain being freely expressed we come to an oasis in the desert, the calm in the midst of the storm. A chapter that at first glance seems to be a continuation of Job's speeches but its tone and its thoughtfulness and its beauty sets it apart from everything else in the book.

And it is all about wisdom, where you can find it. In this way it acts as both a turning point in the book and a foundation that everything later on in the book refers back to. So why didn't I start with Job 28 and build Job's defence and Elihu's arguments on top of it?

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Well, have you ever seen the movie Memento? It starts at the end of the story where Insurance investigator Leonard Shelby finds his wife has been murdered. And each piece of the puzzle is found by jumping backwards in time. Until the key piece of evidence is found at the end of the film which of course time wise was at the very beginning.

Job 28 is the key piece of evidence to understand the question, where is wisdom to be found? And so, having looked forward and looked within for wisdom this poem will tell us that wisdom is found when we look up and fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

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Job 28 has three stanzas with the first stanza telling us that searching will not find us wisdom. And it compares looking for wisdom is a bit like looking for silver or gold. *“There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined. <sup>2</sup> Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore. <sup>3</sup> Mortals put an end to the darkness; they search out the farthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness”.*

Human beings are very good at looking for precious metals below the earth. We know how to use the latest know how. We can cut shafts deep in the earth, we can go down into the deep dangling on ropes. We can transform the landscape below. We can tunnel through the rock. And there it is. The object that we were looking for. Gold, silver, iron ore, precious stones. We are good at that, very good at that.

Even today we send submarines to the deepest troughs of the oceans, rockets to the furthest part of the solar systems, cameras deep inside the human body, our know how, our technological skills are so much better than the rest of the animal kingdom, but have we been able to use all this technology to find wisdom? I think we would all agree no. We are no wiser than the previous generation even though our knowledge has grown enormously.

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So, searching for wisdom will not work so maybe we can buy wisdom? No, the second stanza says that won't work either. *“It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed out in silver. <sup>16</sup> It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx. <sup>17</sup> Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold.”*

Money and riches can buy almost anything we want. A good schooling. A nice house. Good health. Maybe if you are rich enough you could even be the President of the US of A. But all the riches of the world will not purchase wisdom. If you were to look at the markets it would say that Gold is currently around \$2,750 an ounce, crude oil is \$58 a barrel but the price of wisdom is out of this world. No one, no one can afford to get near it.

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So where can we find wisdom? Is it within us and it will come out during suffering? Is it the future and so the longer we live life the more we know that is true? Is it found in tradition or spirituality or experience? No, no, no. *“God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, <sup>24</sup> for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.”*

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God made the world and he alone knows where the storehouses of wisdom really are. God created wisdom and so he is the one who can lead us to its gates. And God is the epitome of wisdom so if you want to be wise, if you want to know the reason things happen in this world, if you want to know how to live in a crazy mucked up world that is full of good and bad, pain and joy, suffering and laughter. Then God says that the secret is, *“The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.”*

If you want to be wise, bow down before God. If you want to understand how this world ticks you need to fear the one who made this world. You need to live the life that God made you to live. You need to turn from evil and follow him. Walk with him. Live for him.

Where do we find wisdom? We look up. We hold God and his ways in awe. We don't understand everything but he does. We can only ever see a part of the whole, but God knows everything. His wisdom is boundless; our wisdom is bounded. His wisdom is total. Ours is finite and provisional.

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And that should humble us. We should humble ourselves before God & before others. Pride, personal pride is one of our biggest barriers to wisdom. Thinking we know it all will stop us from learning wisdom. Arrogance or talking all the time will not cultivate the sort of relationship with God that will make us wise. It involves looking forward, what does God want me to do. Looking inward, what is God teaching me about this situation, and looking upward, what God is revealing to me?

It involves realising that God wants to speak and I need to listen closely. It involves realising that God doesn't abandon me but walks through all of life with me. It involves being open to his spirit. It involves repenting and obeying. It involves seeking the Lord and His wisdom more than anything else in this world.

Slide 25

#### **4. Spirit Wisdom, Suffering Wisdom, Sovereign Wisdom and Saving Wisdom.**

But the book of Job is not the last word on wisdom. Wisdom is not in a book or a school or a Church it resides in a person. God has revealed Himself to us in His own Son, Jesus Christ. As Paul says in 1 Cor 1 <sup>21</sup> *For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.* <sup>22</sup> *Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,* <sup>23</sup> *but we preach Christ crucified... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."*

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Where is wisdom found? In the person of Jesus Christ. He tells us things about God that otherwise we would never know. In fact Pauls says according to Colossians 2:2 *"My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,* <sup>3</sup> *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"*.

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So, ministers are not automatically the wisest people that you will meet, neither are university students, nor skilled tradesman. The wise person is the one who puts their trust in Jesus, who walks with Jesus and over time Jesus wisdom rubs off on them. They listen to God's voice in the pleasures and the pain. They are open to what the Spirit and the Word has to say. They seek the forgiveness made available to them through Jesus death on the cross. And they live humble, Jesus dependent lives. That's real wisdom.

You get that? You're scared of the future. You don't understand the present. You're haunted by the ghosts of the past. Sometimes you feel like you don't know which way is up. You're lost in the maze. You're stuck down the mine, seeking diamonds of wisdom and only finding shadows. Job says to us, "The fear of the Lord, that's wisdom." Trust in Christ. He is wisdom.

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Let me end with the first question and answer from The Heidelberg Catechism. It asks, *"What is your only comfort in life and in death?"* And its answer... *"My only comfort in life and in death, in pain and sickness and sorrow, My only comfort is that I am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ, who, with His precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins and delivered me from all the power of the devil and so preserves me that, without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head. Indeed, all things must work together for my good and for my salvation. And therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing from now on to live unto Him."* If we know this, believe this and follow this, then each of us here will grow in wisdom.

**Song – Cling to Christ** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0naB3Nb7boE>

**Song – In the cross of Christ I glory**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqksJxttep8>

### **Benediction.**

Remember that we don't always get what we deserve, but instead we have the joy of living under God's grace. So today, go out into the world relying on his grace, knowing that Grace and peace are yours in abundance, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

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**Morning Tea** Our morning tea is a vital way that we give and receive fellowship during a time like this. We don't want to be just consumers of Church; we want to be a part of the family of God. So why not give one or two people a call. Who might your ring now?