

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost (Ordinary 20)
15-08-2021
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14 Solomon asks for wisdom to rule God's people

Psalms 111 I will do my best to live a life following God

Ephesians 5:11-21 Deeds done in darkness will be exposed
Live your life following God's Will

John 6: 51-58 Jesus declares himself to be the Bread of Life.
Those who ate manna died,
Those who feed on Jesus will live forever.

Introduction

In the first reading from 1 Kings today we hear Solomon ask God for wisdom to lead the people of Israel.

The seeking of God's wisdom is a common theme throughout the bible.

In Psalm 111 today we hear these words:-

[¹⁰The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and of good understanding are those that keep his commandments](#)

God's wisdom is often countercultural, and although Christianity has been one of the building blocks for our western society, God's wisdom can often be seen as countercultural today.

Today I would like to explore God's wisdom that Paul is providing to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 5: 11-14

[¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.](#)

[¹² For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; ¹³ but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'](#)

Firstly, what are the "unfruitful works of darkness"? It is anything that leads us away from God. In another word, sin. Paul is using very emotive language to help the Ephesians know that we can't hide anything from God.

I wonder how you would feel if we were able to put up video's in Church of the bad things that we've done or said. I for one, would definitely not like that to happen. But God has the video, and God knows. That's why the offer of Jesus in our Gospel reading today is so wonderful. In himself, in his body and blood, Jesus offers us life in all its fullness. If we repent, and accept what Jesus has done for us, then we can know that we are forgiven and reconciled to God. Jesus offers us eternal life with God.

Paul wants us to know that we can't hide from God. Paul is also really saying that we need to expose that which is not right, to the light. This can be very difficult to bring into practice. In Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus gives us a good guide about how to seek reconciliation with others. There are a number of steps, from seeking reconciliation privately, to using witnesses and then to using the whole church. And we see, that as we live in a broken world, Jesus acknowledges that reconciliation between human beings may not be possible. However, just as we are reconciled to God through Jesus, we should seek to be reconciled with one another.

Ultimately though, we know that God's light will shine on everything. The words Paul uses, 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' Are probably taken from Isaiah 60:1, where the prophet is looking forward to the coming of the Messiah.

Ephesians 5: 15-17

¹⁵ Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Here we see Paul is calling the Ephesians to be careful how they live. Paul is encouraging them to be wise and not foolish. But how do we do this? Paul says we do it by understanding the will of God. Sometimes it is easy to understand the will of God, and other times it is not so straight forward.

An example which highlights this is being part of a Christian Community. I think it's pretty clear that God would want us to be part of a Christian faith community, what may not be so clear and might take some discernment is which Church should we attend.

God's will is generally more clear to us when we are more aligned with God. As we read the bible, as we pray, as we gather together in worship, as we seek the guidance of other Christians, we are more likely to be able to discern God's will for our lives. It can be a great challenge to be careful how we live. We are pressured by the world around us to focus on ourselves, when we really should be focusing on God. The more in tune we are with God's will, the more satisfying and complete our lives are likely to be.

Ephesians 5: 18

¹⁸ Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit,

This one is pretty clear, Paul is telling the Ephesians not to get drunk.

I think we need to look a bit closer as Paul is not telling them not to drink wine at all, but rather not to get drunk. I think there is a difference, and it's around control. If we are not in control, then I think it can be a very dangerous thing. Now this is also applicable not only to alcohol, but to anything that is addictive and takes our focus off God's will.

If we are in tune with God, then it will be the Holy Spirit that will be guiding and directing our lives.

Ephesians 5: 19-20

¹⁹ as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, ²⁰ giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are called to give thanks to God all the time. Really, all the time. What a great challenge this is. Amid all the current turmoil around the world with COVID-19, it seems like a great challenge to be continually giving thanks to God. But this is God's wisdom for us, and I believe it is good for our lives.

I also like that we are called to make melody to the Lord in our hearts, because we have not been able to sing together for quite a while now.

So let us endeavour to give thanks to God every day. No matter the challenges, not matter the difficulties, if we take our problems to God and give thanks to God, we will be enabled to feel God's peace in the face of the storms life throws at us. This is of course easy to say and not so easy to do, so we need to persevere.

Ephesians 5: 21

²¹ Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

If we love God, and are at peace with God because of what Jesus has done for us then we are also called to be subject to one another. We matter to one another. As human beings we cannot exist without one another. So we are called to love and care for one another.

Conclusion

Clearly there is some challenging wisdom from Paul's letter to the Ephesians which we have looked at today.

We have been called to live God's way, conforming our lives to God's will, and not our own desires.

God's wisdom is often at odds with the wisdom of the world.

It is a great challenge to be continually discerning God's will for our lives, however I believe, the closer we become to God in Jesus, the more we will be enabled to align our will, with God's will, and the more we will find meaning, purpose and hope in our lives. Amen.