



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sermon for Sunday 7 February 2021
Bible Readings: Proverbs 8: 1, 22-31; Colossians 1: 15-20; St John 1: 1-14
'A journey into God's wisdom'
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Introduction to the Readings and my Reflections

If we think back to our early years on our journey of life, we had to learn things for the very first time: manners, school, first job, driving etc. Back then it seemed that one size had to fit all making no allowances for individual aptitude in acquiring knowledge. One of the joys of reading the Bible is that our minds are free to roam with the words. When a little gem of understanding gleams that we had not seen before, we can treasure that knowledge and develop our understanding of it without the demands and time constraints of daily living. This, as I see it, is God creating space in our hearts and minds to receive his wisdom when, as individuals, we are ready to grow in faith.

We will make three stops on our journey visiting the thoughts of three people, as reflected in their writings: Solomon's Book of the Proverbs; St Paul's Letter to the Colossians; and St John's Gospel. The three readings seem to connect every facet of life that runs through the Bible from beginning to end.

Reflection: Part 1

Solomon's mindset: King Solomon's wisdom is legendary. When he was appointed king to succeed his aging father King David, God invited Solomon to state what gifts he would like to receive during his reign: humbly, he asked for wisdom.

Wisdom the first work of Creation: we may recall that the first chapter of Genesis starts with 'In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth': in the above extract Solomon considers that God created 'wisdom' at the beginning of his works before any other action. Solomon reasons that the earth the work of God's creation thrived, because the wisdom God used to coordinate every facet of life was 'beside him like a master worker'. Solomon's request and his reflections infer that the wisdom created by God, the source of all wisdom, will be imparted to those who seek it.

Reflection: Part 2

Paul's mindset: Paul studied the Jewish scriptures and law under the tutelage of Gamaliel, who was a learned Pharisee and leading authority in the Sanhedrin. Paul's studies resulted in a passionate zeal to adhere to those Jewish teachings. Later, after his conversion to Christianity, he applied that knowledge to develop his spiritual understanding of Christianity and with equal zeal delighted in sharing his discoveries with all those he met on his many missionary journeys.

Divine wisdom becomes visible: In his letter to the Colossians Paul overlays his reflections on the life and ministry of Jesus on his foundational knowledge of God's words in the scriptures and the law. He deduces that 'Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of creation.' If we conjoin Paul's logic with that of Solomon, then the wisdom of God became incarnate in Christ.

Divine reconciler: Were we faultless, God would have had no need to come to earth in our human form to live beside us to provide for our salvation. Paul explains to the Colossians the wisdom of Christ's sacrifice of himself on the cross and resurrection enabled God to reconcile humankind to himself. The result of that reconciliation was that Christ created the church becoming its head in terms of leadership imparting wisdom to us, its members.

Reflection: Part 3

John's mindset: John was young when called by Jesus to be his disciple. The Gospel of John is written as though after a lifetime of reflection looking back on the ministry and mission of Jesus. John has connected together all of those little gems of spiritual discovery to make the whole. The Gospel, as all good things should do, starts at the beginning.

Back to the beginning: John too echoes Genesis starting with, 'In the beginning'. The feature that sparks John's thoughts are the words of God. We will recall that each new development of creation was prefaced with "And God said ... and it was so." In John's mind the author of creation is synonymous with 'the Word, and the Word was God'. What is the result of that?

1. nothing creative happens except by God's word;
2. when God conveys in words all that is in his mind he creates wisdom, as Solomon reasoned;
3. those words of wisdom became incarnate in Christ, as both John and Paul deduced.

Our mindset: Since Adam, humankind has deviated from God's words of wisdom, therefore, how can 'grace and truth' be recreated in us so that we may grow in wisdom?

Renewed creation: In life we are offered limitless opportunities to repent and to receive restorative forgiveness of our sins. The result is renewed creation, which God enables by:

1. restoring our relationship with him to help heal the hurts we have created with him and others;
and
2. recreating us morally and spiritually so that we may be stronger to withstand future temptations.'

Eternal renewal: All of the foregoing begs the question 'What happens next?' Potentially, more than at any other time in recent history the current pandemic has caused more people collectively to contemplate the inevitability of death: this can make us feel vulnerable. In the Book of Revelation God continues as he began, 'See, I am making all things new' showing that his desire to create never ends, he always seeks to make all things new. When the end of our life comes God will gather our restless spirits to him. God, the Alpha and Omega of creation, will secure us by recreating us in his image so that we are restored to the beginning of his perfect creation.

Journey's end: Our journey in pursuit of God's wisdom has given us varied insights, as viewed through the minds of others. John brings us home gently with these thoughts: if we receive God's word and believe in him, he creates power in us to become his children and from that relationship, wisdom will flow.

Amen.