

The scripture is from Ephesians 1:15-23:

[Reading Ephesians 1:15-23] Amen

Powerful, powerful scriptures, which I'm going to dig into in a minute. But I just wanted to meditate for a minute on wisdom; wisdom.

How would you score yourself as wise this morning? Where would you score yourself on a scale of 1 to 10? How wise are you? You don't have to put your hand up or answer, I'm just posing that question: How wise are you? How wise am I? We might find out as this goes.

Some philosopher, Aristotle, said "Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom." Knowing *yourself* is the beginning of all wisdom. How does that compare with the scripture that Pastor Steve put up earlier on?

Socrates, a compatriot of Aristotle, said "The only true wisdom is in knowing that you know nothing."

Albert Einstein, perhaps following on Socrates, said "Any fool can know, the point is to understand."

Confucius, a Chinese philosopher, said "The one who knows all the answers has not yet been asked all the questions."

And a more modern day philosopher, Jimi Hendrix, said "Knowledge speaks but wisdom listens." Knowledge speaks but wisdom listens.

There's lots of different kinds of wisdom, and it's not sufficient to just think about it. The theme "Praying for spiritual wisdom" is interesting, it's provocative, it's not helpful to say that human wisdom is bad and Godly wisdom is good – that's not helpful not helpful. It's not helpful. James, when he writes in his book, he says – his letter – he says, he describes it as "Heavenly and earthly: wisdom that comes from above and wisdom that comes from below.

So we're thinking about wisdom, types of wisdom. You can think about magicians, or soothsayers: the wise men that came to visit Jesus; wise men were – in scripture, if you've read Daniel, they were highly thought of people, they were prominent in the courts of the time; these magicians, they were people who were thought to be particularly wise because they'd delved into the secrets of nature and thought that they'd found answers.

We think about wisdom, you can think about it in terms of abilities, of skills. Stephanie was just talking about the law. Somebody who's mastered a skill can be thought of as wise in that area. Wisdom is equated with cleverness, sometimes even cunning – craftiness even. But that's not necessarily wisdom that comes from above.

Practical wisdom: in terms of how we manage our lives, how we manage our finances, how we manage our health.

Cultural Wisdom: these days we have something I don't remember having when I was younger, we have influences now – cultural influences: when did that start? But apparently these are people who have their finger on the pulse of what's happening in the culture, and they're wise in these

matters – not like the sons of Issachar, but, maybe, the children of social media.

Rules of conduct, manners, customs, norms: being wise in these things sometimes helpful. Going to a culture where they don't shake hands and if you go and put your hand out to shake hands that's considered bad manners. So presuming upon the fact that everybody shakes hands is unwise.

Ethics, ethical conduct: being wise in matters of ethics. Piety, wisdom holiness.

Academic wisdom we already talked about but then also, a long word here, eschatological wisdom: knowing what is to come. Prophets would be eschatologically wise. Knowing about the last days, the last times.

All of these types of wisdom can be good and bad. They can all be good and bad. So just to say that wisdom is found in these areas is not sufficient, and it's certainly not what Paul is praying for when he prays for the people to have a Spirit of wisdom and revelation – it's what he prays for: the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Many times in the book Proverbs – throughout the first 9 chapters of Proverbs – the scriptures talk about wisdom as being there at the beginning, as being something which God used to bring creation into being: it was wisdom and knowledge and understanding that he used to bring everything about, and it's wisdom knowledge and understanding which he uses to sustain everything. Godly, Godly wisdom

it's a little unfair, and I'm not being mean to Pastor Steve, but it's a little unfair that he gave me the passage from 15 to 23 because it starts with the phrase “For this reason...” It starts with the phrase “For this reason...” Therefore you have to ask “What that reason was?” Right?

We're thinking about “For this reason...” “For this reason, since I heard of your faith and your love for all the saints...” So it's not that he's heard “the faith and the love for all the saints” and that's the reason, there's another reason that he's praying for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

This is what he says: [Reads Ephesians 1:3-12]. For this reason. For this reason, Paul said. I'm praying for you to have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that you would know, that you would know, all these things. You have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. You have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms – do you feel like that this morning?

Chosen, predestined, adopted, saved by grace, redeemed by the blood of Christ, forgiven of our sins, given revelation of the mystery, and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Chosen, predestined, adopted, saved by grace, redeemed by the blood, forgiven of our sins, given revelation of the mystery, and sealed with the Holy Spirit. Why on earth, then, would Paul then be saying “I'm praying for you to have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” if you've got all those things? ([a mobile phone rings] Someone is calling to answer the question. Hallelujah.)

It's because we forget. We forget. We've been given these things! It's like what John writes to the church of Ephesus in revelation (I think it's Ephesus) – he says “...you've forgotten your first love.” You've forgotten your first love. We do; we forget. When you first come to faith, you first get the revelation, you first kind of have the flush the Holy Spirit – all these things are fresh in your mind and we have joy because of them. But then it sort of starts to fade a bit. It can. Am I wrong? The fire can start to get a little bit dampened down, and you can start to get almost like it looks like it's going out a little bit. So it needs to be blown upon. It needs to have air blown upon it to freshen it up a bit.

So that's why Paul is saying he's constantly praying for the church. He's constantly praying for the church to have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. What? To know him better? To know Christ better? That's the number one thing: the Spirit of wisdom and revelation – To know Christ. Knowing you Jesus. It's the only thing, right?

Then, that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, as again, Paul writes to the church in Corinth, 'cause when the Holy Spirit shines in our hearts to give us the light and the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; so when we know Jesus Christ, the eyes of our heart are enlightened three ways: to know the hope to which he has called us, to know the riches of his glorious inheritance, and his incomparably great power for us who believe – yeah, we are weak, and we do forget, but yet we also have a comparably great power through faith, and it's guaranteed for us: the Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. Which is what?

Well, this is perhaps a preach for another time, but Jewish marital rights are slightly different than we do it here. Here you get engaged, you maybe plan for the wedding immediately, but you're already engaged.; now on the wedding day you get married, and the dowry gets given on the wedding day. But in the Jewish customs, there was something called a Matan (מתן), a bridal gift, which was given upon the betrothal, that was giving up on the engagement; it's linked to the word charismata (χαρίσματα), which is the word which we used to describe the spiritual gifts, and Matan is, if you like, something which is used to prefigure the giving of the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit is given to us as the bride, the bride of Christ, by which he has united himself in a one-flesh union for all time. And the Holy Spirit is a deposit of that because our future, our eternity, is to be with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to be wed to Christ.

And we're already done; it's already done: the betrothal, like an engagement that we have here, isn't something which can be called off – when you get betrothed in the Jewish custom, you're already married, but the bride's given a period of time to perfect herself, to come away. A period in between where she's with her old family, and planning to be then carried away, across the threshold by her new husband into the new family. So our old family would be humanity, maybe, or Adam, and then we're waiting for the time when Christ is going to come and fully, completely, carry us away – consummate the union. Not...you know what I mean, spiritually. Spiritual wisdom. Are you with me so far?

Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know him better. In this period of time that we are given between leaving our old family and waiting to be called and brought into, completely into, a marriage with Christ, we are given the opportunity to get to know our bridegroom better. Because, as Paul writes, “In him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

In Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge – you can't find them anywhere else. As Pastor Steve put up: “Wisdom comes from God. It can be corrupted once it's given.” And some of those ways that we talked about earlier on: they can definitely be corrupted. You think about financial wisdom: it can be completely corrupted if you look at the stock market. Decisions which are made which can be thought to be financially prudent in the stock market, are absolutely crushing when you think about it for people perhaps in other areas; so what might make somebody rich, on earth, makes somebody else poor, doesn't it? That's not prudence – what do we call that? Greed!

So we are called to make spiritual judgements, and how do we do that? Well we have to look at Christ – the church is called to look at Christ, and how Christ behaves in all these areas, and what he says about all these areas, and then not to deviate from that. It's not complicated, but we do.

That's why Paul prays, and that's why anybody who's got any affinity with Christians, Christianity and the Christian faith, has to be praying that the church would have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know him better, because only when we know him better will we be spared the mistakes of doing things from wisdom from below.

There's two ways you can have wisdom: one is in possessing it which is right – it's alright to have wisdom. But it's putting into practise: that's the main thing – applying wisdom in what we do. I can stand up here and I'll tell you things, and tell you that I know things, but unless I actually put them into practice, it's pretty hypocritical, isn't it?

How well do we know him? How well do we know the hope to which he calls us? How often do we celebrate the riches of his glorious inheritance? And how often do we plug into his incomparably great power for us who believe?

What is that power? What is that power? [congregation member: Resurrection power] It is. What comes before the resurrection? The cross. The cross. The cross. Paul talks about the cross – this is what Paul says: [Reads I Corinthians 1:18-20, "...teacher of the law..."] (sorry Stephanie) [continues I Corinthians 1:20] (by the way, I could have easily said, where is the theologian?) [continues I Corinthians 1:21-24, "...who God has called..."] (us!) [continues I Corinthians 1:24-25] (Amen, amen) [continues I Corinthians 1:26 "...when you were called"] I know what I was when I was called, but it's alright: God chose – remember chosen – [continues from 1 Corinthians 1:27-30] Christ the power of God, the wisdom of God. Amen? Amen. To know him better.

To know him better – that's what it's all about; that's all it's about. The hope to which he calls us. There's a future hope, but then there's a present hope as well: the hope to which he calls us now. Church. The church.

Chapter 3 and I think it's 10...chapter 3 verse 10 – see if I remembered it right. This is the best, this is the best verse when I was studying...10, yes it is! "His intent" (God's intent) "was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms."

"His intent was that *now*, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms." The heavenly realms isn't just up there, this is a heavenly realm – this is one of the heavenly realms. Ok, so his intent was that now through who? The church – who is the church? The manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. Amen.

So what did we just say? Who was the power and wisdom of God? Jesus. So, how do we, then, make known the manifold wisdom of God as the church? Come on folks, help me out.

As he is, so are we in this world. As he is, so are we in this world. Yeah? Is that true? Is it true? As he is, so are we in this world. *As he is, so are we in this world*. Which means a couple of things, doesn't it? It means were seated at the right hand of God, it means we have access to God, but it also means that we are the lamb that was slain in heaven.

So we've got to demonstrate the power and wisdom of God – how? In the same way that Christ demonstrated the power and wisdom of God – how? Through the Spirit. Christ went to the cross, it says in Hebrews, he went to the cross by the power of the eternal Spirit. And it's what we have to do. There's no other way that we can take up our cross daily. Pastor Steve said earlier on that we're too weak to do it. We are! I'm too weak to take up my cross daily without the Spirit calling me to do it; so are you. But we're not on our own, folks, we have the Spirit. Therefore we have

the power to do it.

And if we don't do it, then how is the manifold wisdom of God to be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms? Is there any other way? There's no other way. We can't get away from this, folks: chosen, predestined, adopted, saved by grace, redeemed by the blood, forgiven our sins, given revelation of the mystery (that is that God has made for himself a people to be his bride), and sealed with the Holy Spirit, is exclusive for those who have faith in Jesus Christ. And it's not something about which we should be afraid: it's something about which we have to boast. What Jesus has done has made all these things possible, and we have to remind each other of these things – that's why we get together and encourage one another – because if we don't then we forget. You've been chosen, in Christ.

You've been chosen in Christ, the son of God: you have the same status in God's eyes as his son. You were predestined to do so. God made this all happened in accordance with his will, which is not to say, to be hyper-Calvinist about it and say, he picked each and everyone one of you out – he didn't, he just made the circumstances such that those of us who were weak, lowly, despised could have come to the status of those who were the sons of God through Christ, by having faith in him. And it's good news.

It's good news and it not something we should be afraid of, scared about, because we're only talking about having faith, we're not talking about actually earning anything, are we? We're not clever 'cause we had faith – we were lowly, despised, weak, helpless, hopeless, dead, children of wrath. And Jesus made a way for us to be raised up with him.

The end of Proverbs, the last chapter of Proverbs, Proverbs 31, and with this I'm going to stop. The last chapter, it's called an epilogue. It's an epilogue and it's called “The wife of noble character.” And I looked at all my commentaries, and I couldn't find one agrees with me which might mean I'm wrong, or it might mean I'm special but I'm standing by it.

It is writing about a woman and a wife, it is also writing about the husband, but it is specifically, I believe, writing about the church. A wife of noble character. Who can find a bride of noble character? Who can find? I could read it...shall I read it? “A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.” And we know he's talking about wisdom because it says that earlier on: wisdom is worth more than rubies. So, a church of noble character, who can find? A church which has the wisdom, the manifold wisdom of God, is worth far more than rubies. Far more than rubies.

[Continues reading verse 11 “Her husband...”] Christ [continues 11-12, “...has full confidence ...days of her life”] not just Sundays. [Continues 13-16 “...She considers a field...”] mission, ministry, [continues 16]. This is how we started, wasn't it? Prayer is spiritual food. She plants a vineyard: Christ is the true vine. Fruitfulness. How fruitful are we? [Continues 17] How many times are we going to put out calls for volunteers in the church and not have them met?

I have a suspicion that the reason that they're not being met is perhaps because the church isn't fulfilling your needs. But if that's the case, make them known, please, so that the church can meet them, and then when the church expresses her needs, would you please meet those? Else we're making of God a liar, because he says that there's everything that's needed in the house. This is not a small church – I'm not talking to 10 to 15 people here. If there's needs in this church, there's something wrong.

A wife of noble character who can find? Chris is looking for a bride, a wife of noble character. I'm

not going to do the rest [verses 18-31], read it for yourself. Read it for yourself when you get home: read the passage and think about it as what we're called to as disciples, as a bride of Jesus Christ. Consider it for yourself, and then consider it when you look at the church, and then when we're thinking about wisdom, we thinking about a couple of things: love, truth, grace.

We've got to be able to speak truth to each other, haven't we? So let's be a family who can speak the truth to one another without fear of reprisals. If we think that we're not doing something, we think that's something wrong, we should be able to bring it to each other, and share it with one another, shouldn't we? We should be able to do that. We shouldn't be coming in here worried that you might say something, or worried that something you were thinking, is inappropriate – bring it. Bring it, share it. Please; because we're body – it's not all on Pastor Steve, it's not all on the rest of the leadership team, it's about everybody.

I've got to stop because I could go on for hours and you'd be praying for another church to get rid of me, wouldn't you. Look, all I'm saying really – I know we're going to have a bit of prayer time, and I've gone on a little bit too long, but – let's be honest: where are you this morning? Where do you think the church is this morning? Let's be honest with one another, because it's on us – it's a lot on us – but we can do it. We can do it, right?

Incomparably great power for us who believe. We can do it. I'm going to finish with a prayer ('cause somebody told me that I haven't been finishing with prayers, so I'd better do that).

Heavenly Father, we are your church. Thank you that through Jesus Christ you have chosen us, that you predestined us, to be raised up and seated with him in the heavenly realms. Thank you also for the calling that you've given us on this earth. Lord, help us to help each other, and help us together help the community in which we are, so we can bring more people to Christ, so that we can help the country, so that this country, as a Christian country, can help the world. Amen.