



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

CANADIAN MEMORIAL CHURCH  
& CENTRE FOR PEACE

Preached by The Rev. Sophia Ducey  
1 Kings 3:3-14; Wisdom 9:1-18; 7:12-21

August 16, 2009

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

## Wisdom of the Heart

Open my eyes that I may see, glimpses of truth thou hast for me.  
Open my ears, that I may hear, voices of truth thou sendest clear.  
Open my heart and let me prepare, love with thy children thus to share.  
Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see.

What does it mean to invite Wisdom into our hearts? Can we truly ask God, like King Solomon did, to:

*“Dispatch Wisdom from the holy heavens, send her forth from your throne of glory to help me and to toil with me and teach me what is pleasing to you; since she knows and understands everything she will guide me prudently in my actions and will protect me with her glory.”*

We heard two versions of Solomon’s prayer for Wisdom. The first, from 1 Kings, shares the authors’ account of Solomon’s dream in Gibeon. What’s interesting, and not focused on in many Christian circles, is that Solomon has gone to a holy place where worshipping gods from different cultures occurred. He is seeking insight and support as a young leader and burns 1000 incenses in order to activate this divine insight.

This type of ritual makes sense from the prevalent level of consciousness at that time. The burning of incense to invoke the spirits that guide and rule the universe was a common practice. As the laws were passed down in Jewish culture, this type of practice came to be seen as idolatry of other gods other than the one true God. Although Solomon honoured the rules of his father King David, he found himself seeking God, and the expression of Wisdom, through practices passed down through the cultures outside his Jewish faith.

The second version read this morning is from Wisdom, whose author connects his writings to many of the earlier writings of the First Testament. In this version, we receive a more in-depth view of Solomon’s prayer, his humble request as a young man for God to send to him Wisdom, the cohort of God, she

who has been with God since the beginning of creation, and the intermediary for those on earth. Solomon seeks companionship with Wisdom to *help him and to toil with him and teach him what is pleasing to God; since she knows and understands everything she will guide him prudently in his actions and protect him with her glory.*

While we could conclude from the first reading that Solomon sought wisdom in the form of mental knowledge and leadership skills, he is also asking for a wise heart, a discerning heart, and to know the will of God through kinship with Wisdom. It is a deeper yearning being expressed in this prayer, a yearning to know God within; to experience the divine fully in consciousness and in action. Solomon reflects that he believes the only way for this to be possible is for God to send his Wisdom, that she might live in his heart and guide his every thought and action as a young leader.

For this humble request, God grants this and so much more. As Solomon seeks first the Kingdom of God, he is granted Wisdom, and a long life with riches to enjoy and express Wisdom's beauty on Earth. Wisdom comes to live in Solomon's heart.

Today we find ourselves in the midst of another summer in Vancouver. Perfect time to be talking about the heart and the

descending of Wisdom into our hearts. In many traditions, summer and fire are associated with the heart. The heart is said to be the seat of wisdom, truth and beauty that resides within us. When the heart is balanced, all other organs and processes function as they should.

The Chinese word for heart is xin, spelled XIN, but pronounced "sin" or "shin" and translated as Heart-Mind. In addition to governing our physical bodies, the Heart-Mind also affects our consciousness. We can think of Wisdom as the divine spark within our Heart-Mind. Insight and awareness on all levels: mental, emotional, and physical, shines through us as we open our hearts to express her glory through us. When our decisions, speech and actions are made in accordance with Wisdom, we are healthy and at ease within ourselves. Life is effortless, an adventure unfolding, a place of infinite possibilities.

Unfortunately, sometimes we disassociate from our heart and doubt our divine connection, our intuition. We react instead from past beliefs and emotions triggered by experiences we may not even consciously remember. This disrupts the energetic flow within and interferes with the clarity of Wisdom's message within us.

When our hearts are open, fire energy expands and radiates outward like light. There is a natural awareness and caring about others. We want to reach out, to share in the delight of life around us. We, like Solomon have the opportunity to become still. To do the rituals of our own spiritual practices – meditation, chanting, prayers, and open up to Wisdom penetrating our hearts.

We are called now to look at what are the evolutionary Christian practices of our time that allow us to open your hearts and our minds to Wisdom, in her many forms. I often laugh when certain practices are called “New Age” when in fact they are “Old Age” practices brought back into post-modern culture. For some, ancient practices from the Chinese culture invite us to rearrange our houses, and put certain colours or plants or elements in specific places to balance our feng sui. For others, smudging or “clearing the space” allows for the release of “bad energies” and invitation for “good energies” to come into our homes and lives. Others might use incense, mala or rosary beads, or sacred chants from various faith traditions to inspire a meditation practice. There seems to be a deck of cards for most anything – Tarot of all sorts, medicine cards, oracle goddess cards, power cards – all wonderful avenues for insight. Anyone remember the Ouija boards of our youth – or maybe that was just an

American thing? All these practices are used as attempts at connecting into the higher realms, through “old age” practices, made anew.

Rev Bruce talked about the three faces of God a number of weeks ago. One of the evolutionary Christian practices might be to cultivate these three faces – the I AM presence within, the Beloved Thou as God, Wisdom, Christ, and God as Immanent in all creation, the principle of God, the Suchness in which we move and have our being. As we go deeper with our contemplative practices to feel, hear and see the All-ness of God, we are able to settle into the presence of God as the harmonizing wisdom that settles our hearts and guides our minds and our actions.

How do we truly have a deep and profound commune with the Divine? Are we able to cultivate a personal prayer practice that allows us to hear the still small voice of Wisdom, whispering her gentle promptings for us to experience and express the Holy Spirit of our being more fully? With the loudness and busyness of life, how and when do we take the time for meditation and prayer, in whatever way our being calls forth to feel the presence of God within? Only when we create such a practice, can we live in the constant awareness of Wisdom’s presence in our hearts.

Author Paul Pitchford writes:

“Those with healthy hearts are genuinely friendly. They are also humble, not out of convention but because they actually feel small in comparison to the wonders they perceive with their open hearts and aware minds. Clarity is a central attribute of those with a harmonious heart-mind. They seem to see effortlessly through problems to arrive at brilliant solutions.”

Last year I read a book, ‘Leadership & Self Betrayal.’ The premise of the book was that we often deny our intuition and act in a manner that we betray Wisdom’s guidance. We deny our God-Self and we close our hearts to ourselves and others. Every time we honour our intuition – we have the experience of the indwelling presence. Every time we don’t honour our intuition, we experience separation and discomfort.

I am finding that I am continuously called to a deeper and more profound sense of surrender in order to feel Wisdom’s presence. My most profound experience of her was last summer. In a session with my spiritual director, or practitioner as we call them, I set an intention for a warm comforting presence of the divine to be with me. I, like Solomon was seeking the guidance and companionship of Wisdom to dwell within me and my life. I didn’t know at the time that that was what I was seeking.

Wisdom came to me in all her glory. I had previously had an experience with her in Ukraine in a beautiful orthodox cathedral. That earlier experience came back to me last summer and has been my constant reminder that “I am not alone.” Throughout the fall, I cultivated her presence in my being, allowing myself to deepen in my understanding of her ways. At times, I consciously surrendered my human, often egoic will to a higher will, the will of Wisdom

We in North America don’t tend to surrender very well, not to anyone or anything. We might say, “let go and let God,” but the claw marks on most areas of our lives show an inability to truly let go. Or is it just me? There are times when we are called, by life’s experiences, to get down on our knees, literally or figuratively, acknowledging our limitations – whatever they may be - of age, knowledge, skill, depth, and allow Wisdom to come to rest in our hearts, to guide our way.

During our Feast of Wisdom today, we will share in a reading from Proverbs that says, “deep reverence of God is the pathway to Wisdom, deep knowing of the Holy One is understanding.” When we find ourselves doubting, wondering, confused or frustrated, there is an answer. We must invite Wisdom into our hearts to have the peace that we seek in our outer worlds.

In the Buddhist tradition, there is a Sanskrit term Bodhicitta which means Wisdom-heart or the awakened heart-mind; from this Wisdom-heart, one has the aspiration for supreme enlightenment so that all sentient beings may be free from suffering. As we cultivate our Heart Wisdom – the indwelling presence of the Divine in our awakened heart-mind, we experience more grace in our lives and more compassion for ourselves and others.

One way I've learned to rest in Heart Wisdom is to do a contrasting yogic practice. There are a multitude of yoga sutras that focus on opening the heart. One simple one in Yoga Journal last summer is this: Sit in a meditative posture and begin to breathe in and out slowly, feeling the breath through your mouth, your throat and through your heart into your belly a few times. Now take your hands and clench two fists in front of your heart. Notice how this feels. Now open your hands and placing your thumbs together over your heart and your pinkies together, open the rest of your fingers like a lotus flower. Continue to breathe, noticing the opening of your heart, and how it feels, in contrast to when your fists were clenched. This is the experience of the Wisdom-Heart.

,  
anticipating their every thought.

And when you encounter someone who has lost touch with Wisdom, whether they are withdrawn and contracted, or scattered and frantic, listen to your inner voice and let Wisdom direct your actions. Energy is magnetic. The simplest of gestures can ignite or stabilize another's heart, allowing Wisdom to penetrate their being with her loving presence.

I share one last reading with you, reminding each one of us, that the Wisdom we seek is ever-available, and seeking us.

Wisdom 7:12–21

Wisdom is brilliant, she never fades.  
By those who love her, she is readily seen,  
by those who seek her, she is readily found.  
She anticipates those who desire her  
by making herself known first.

Whoever gets up early to seek her  
will have no trouble but will find her  
sitting at the door.  
Meditating on her is understanding in  
its perfect form,  
and anyone keeping awake for her  
will soon be free from care.

For she herself searches everywhere  
for those who are worthy of her,  
benevolently appearing to them on  
their ways

For Wisdom begins with the sincere  
desire for instruction,  
care for instruction means loving her,  
loving her means keeping her laws,  
attention to her laws guarantees  
incorruptibility,  
and incorruptibility brings us near to  
God;

the desire for Wisdom thus leads to  
sovereignty.

If then thrones and sceptres delight  
you,  
honour Wisdom, so that you may  
reign forever