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I Corinthians 2:6-13:

“Wisdom”

- I. The Wisdom of This Age.
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1 Corinthians 2:6-13

Dear Friends in Christ,

Rev. John S. Bonnell was a pastor at New York's Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church from 1935 to 1962. A 1951 article stated that "Harvard's religious policies came in for vehement criticism by Bonnell." The article noted in a sermon he "specifically lashed out at the General Education Report of 1945 (this was 77 years ago) which he claimed started a 'secularist trend' in American colleges because of its refusal to propose religious instruction in the curriculum." Of course, the question would be, what kind of religious instruction? Bonnell also made this observation:

When Rome's youth became debased and enervated (i.e., weak in their mental or moral vigor), when regard was lost for man's honor and women's purity, when the sanctity of the home was violated, when her literature became cynical and debased, her dominion ended. The moral life of any people rises or falls with the vitality or decay of its religious life (and that, of course, depends on who or what is being worshiped).

This world isn't even a fraction of an inch closer to resolving its troubles than it did a 100 years ago, 1,000 years ago, 5,000 years ago. So, let's take a look at . . .

WISDOM

I. The Wisdom of This Age.

Please listen to some of the definitions of "wisdom" from Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition, 1993, but still the same: "...accumulated philosophic or scientific learning (that's scary!)... knowledge...insight...good sense...generally accepted belief (that's scary!)...a wise attitude or course of action (whatever that means)...the teachings of the ancient wise men" (who resolved little along the way and then died).

Would we really want to reminisce about the ebb and flow of this world's thinking and ways? Violence and corruption increase while kindness and decency fade. And the world - the global issues - the one-world order - the thousand points of light - mans' wisdom - are not much more than disorder and lights out.

Many here can remember the "gas shortage" of the 1970's and, as a result, the 55 mile-per-hour speed limit to conserve gas. It was Earlean Collins, an Illinois State Senator of that time, who said, "People are not obeying the 55 mph limit, so the law should be brought into accord with what people want." Well, that's much of the wisdom of the day. Man's wisdom is rarely in line with God's wisdom. So, how much more of this world's wisdom do we want?

Our text begins, "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age who are doomed to pass." (v.6) It's *the same old same old*. In the first chapter of First Corinthians Paul writes:

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise (that is, worldly wisdom), and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.'...Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world.
(I Cor. 1:18,19,20b)

The Lord gave James these words: "...if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth." (Jms. 3:14) Isn't this what we see everywhere? So many want what someone else has, want something for nothing, violently work to destroy. James then states, "This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic." (Jms. 3:14) The Proverbs state, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." We live in a world of dying and death. Marriage is optional, parental responsibility is given to others, the love to protect life fades.

II. A Secret and Hidden Wisdom.

Let's go back to the first part of the sixth verse: "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom...". And the question is: Who are the mature? Going back to the first chapter of First Corinthians Paul states, "but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (I Cor. 1:24) The Greek word translated as "mature" in the ESV has also been translated "perfected" by some. The commentator Lenski wrote, "The simple fact remains that the entire gospel in all its parts is (wisdom), including every part that anyone may label elementary." And then he noted, "the *perfected* (or *mature* as the ESV translates) are those who have reached Christ crucified as the goal." (Lenski, Interpretation of I and II Corinthians, Augsburg Publishing House, p. 95) Commentator Carleton Toppe said it well:

Even our children, who have only an elementary understanding of the gospel, have the highest wisdom when they believe that Jesus died on the cross for them. They are among the "mature" because they have the heart and core of true wisdom.

Even babes in Christ are wiser than this world's leaders... (Carleton A. Toppe, First Corinthians, *People's Bible Commentary*, CPH, p.28)

The fact is, the leaders and worldly wise people of Jesus' time could not answer Pilate's question: "What is truth?" The fact is, the leaders and worldly wise people of the past and present, and those to come, cannot answer that question. Paul states . . .

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" – these things God has revealed to us through the Holy Spirit. (vv.7-10a)

A secret and hidden wisdom of God. Schools, most churches, libraries, the internet, newspapers and magazines, are filled to overflow with human wisdom, and, yet have not even remotely solved the movement of evil, turmoil, and death. We cannot escape the promise Scriptures make as we approach *The End*: "Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who do not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2:11,12)

But we have received the "secret and hidden wisdom of God." You won't find it in the schools, so many churches of the day, the libraries, man's thinking. God's wisdom is God's Word. It's the Word that teaches, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps. 119:105)." It's the Word that teaches, "The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23a)." It's the Word that teaches, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23)." It's the Word that teaches, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8)." It's the Word that teaches, "the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23b)." Jesus is the truth, as He said. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6)." He is the Way: "No one comes to the Father except through me." (Jn. 14:6b) Jesus is the Life. "Whoever believes (that He is the One who paid for all sin) has eternal life." (Jn. 3:16) Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Wisdom of God!

III. Through the Spirit from the Word.

And again, "these things have been revealed to us through the Spirit."; that is, through the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to those first disciples, "When the Spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me..." (Jn. 16:12-14a) "The things that are to come" upon this world are revealed throughout the entire Scriptures. We're watching them unfold now.

Concerning the first disciples, Jesus prayed to the Father, “For I have given them the words you gave me...” (Jn. 17:8) And then He prayed, “I do not ask for these only (those first disciples) but for those who will believe in me through their word.”, which is the word Jesus gave them, which is our New Testament, along with the Old Testament.

In Christ, we have the greatest Wisdom - He is Wisdom - which explains this world's wisdom as *foolish*. As Scripture's say, “Has God not made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (I Cor. 1:20c) And this: “For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness... (I Cor. 3:19).” God's wisdom in Christ gives stability and quality to life as we walk through this valley of the shadow of death, and moves us to eternal life. And this brings to the simplicity and clarity of the closing words of our text:

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God (the Holy Spirit). And we impart these in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (vv.12,13)

Is there really a need for a **different look at wisdom?** Not at all. But we must hold to the loving Wisdom of God in Christ as presented to us in Word and Sacrament; the written and visible Word. We must know and hold to the **Word - Wisdom - Jesus!**

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott