

What the Wise Realize About Jesus

Proverbs 2:1-6; 3:5-6

The story is told about a young man who came to Socrates one day asking if Socrates would be his teacher. The great philosopher asked the man what he wanted most in his life, and the young man said that he wanted knowledge. Socrates then led him into the middle of a pool of water where he grabbed the young man and thrust his head under the water holding it there for 15 seconds. When he pulled the young man up he asked what the man wanted most in life. Panting the man responded that he wanted knowledge. Socrates pushed his head under water and counted to 30. Pulling him up he again asked what the man wanted most in life. Knowledge the man sputtered, I want knowledge. So Socrates dunked him under the water again and this time held him there for 45 seconds. When he pulled the young man up, he asked him what he wanted most in life. The man gasped "I want air." Socrates released him and told the young man that when he wanted knowledge as badly as he wanted air, he would be his teacher.

Today we are completing our study in the book of Proverbs. **Proverbs 2:1-6** provide us with the purpose of why this collection of writings has been compiled. Turn there with me please to begin.

Proverbs 2:1-6

How badly do you want wisdom? True wisdom begins with fearing the Lord. Some of you have taken the challenge I gave at the beginning of this year to read the chapter that corresponds to the day and the challenge was to read through Proverbs each month so that you would have read it 12 times. One person has read it in a different translation each month. I would encourage you to read through it again and mark every promise that is given to the person who chooses to live wisely. This person is spoken in Proverbs as being righteous. So when you are marking down the promises related to the wise it is describing the promises for the righteous.

I hope and pray that this has been a beneficial study for you as we have looked at ancient wisdom that is applicable for modern times. As we have discovered, Proverbs is a series of statements comparing or contrasting life experiences with the intent of helping us have practical insight into the choices we make about common everyday experiences from relationships to handling money to controlling our emotions to work and many other important topics.

We discover in reading Proverbs that every day there are multiple choices to make that shape our character. We choose the path we take by the choices we make. There are only two paths. There is the path of wisdom and there is the path of foolishness. Choose the path of wisdom following these Biblical principles and it will take you down the road of righteousness. Choose the path of foolishness and it will take you down the road of wickedness. The path of righteousness is a difficult path. It requires determination, dedication, desire and death to self. Walking this path will make all the difference in our lives. Its end is life. On the other hand, the path of wickedness is an easy road. It looks very enticing and exciting, but its end is death.

The path of wisdom is a path that trusts the Lord. The path of foolishness is a path that trusts self. **Which path are you on?** As we conclude our series in Proverbs today, this provides a good opportunity to evaluate our life to see whether we are seeking wisdom or foolishness.

What I also hope you have come to realize through our study this past year is that God's wisdom is always available and it is always the right path to take. It is free for the asking and God greatly desires to give it to you. Like the book of Proverbs, **James 1:5** explicitly states that there is only one place to obtain wisdom. **"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives**

generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given him.”

God’s wisdom is free for the asking and He desires to give it to you. It is available IF we accept that it is truth from God, IF we ask for it and IF we seek it diligently. God will not give you His wisdom if you are only asking what His opinion is on a matter so you can decide whether you want to follow it in submission to Him or not. As we learned from **Proverbs 3:5-6**, the wise person has learned to trust the Lord completely with all his heart instead of on his own understanding. An attitude of submission shows honor, respect and reverence. Reverence is the beginning of learning God’s wisdom. *Trusting in the Lord with all your heart is the hinge on which the door of wisdom swings.*

As we conclude our study in Proverbs there is one more truth that I would like to point out about wisdom. With our attention drawn to Christmas this time of year, we want to see what the wise realize about Jesus.

Jesus is more than just the reason for the season. He is the reason period. Without Jesus there is no reason to pursue wisdom. Wisdom and its pursuit would just become an overrated cliché mocking us to find an internal peace to the illusive hole in our life that longs to be filled, but never will be. Without Jesus life is just a meaningless black hole of one day dragging on into the next. Without Jesus there is no hope of anything better or eternal. Without Jesus there is no worth or value. The wise have come to realize who Jesus is as they sift through the pile of wrapping paper and shimmering lights and busy stores and countless hours thinking about and searching for the perfect gift. The wise have come to realize that He is the perfect gift that has been given.

As we approach and celebrate this most festive event of the year, there are three things that I think the wise realize about Jesus and why He came.

The wise realize that Jesus saves.
The wise realize that Jesus sanctifies.
The wise realize that Jesus glorifies.

I. THE WISE REALIZE THAT JESUS SAVES – Luke 19:1-10

In this passage, Jesus was traveling around the countryside and came to the city of Jericho. It was about 15 miles northeast from Jerusalem. Now the text states that He was passing through. So it was not His intention to stay long, but He did enter the city with one purpose on His mind. We learn about that purpose in verse 2. There was a man there by the name of Zacchaeus.

Now just to set the record straight, they did have gaming entertainment in those days. He didn’t play Xbox or Play Station. Zacchaeus was a little Wii man.

Zacchaeus we learn from Luke’s account was a chief tax collector that would have included responsibility over the district and a number of tax agents that reported to him. They were not liked by the Jews because they collected taxes for the Romans. They were considered despicable by the people and thought of as real sinners. As the chief collector he could set the tax. If the Roman government said the tax was \$10, he could make it \$15 and pocket the difference. We don’t know how long he had been in this position but it was long enough to make him rich. His wealth came through fleecing the people.

On this particular day, he had heard that Jesus was passing through town and He was curious about who Jesus was. They had never met but living close to Jerusalem and being on a trade route had no doubt heard about Him. He had one problem though. The Bible says he was short and being short he couldn’t see over the crowd who had lined the street to also get a glimpse at Jesus. Consequently, he couldn’t see the road or Jesus and

having the sort of reputation from his occupation no one was willing to give way to this little man so he could nudge his way through for a look.

I for one like driving through a town that has trees lining the streets. There is something serene and picturesque about it. On this day, Zacchaeus was also glad for trees planted along the road. He took the opportunity to amble up the tree and sit on a limb. I like to think there were a bunch of kids sitting up in the tree as well.

Jesus came by, stopped, looked up into the tree and calling his name, invited him to come down. The ignored became the invited. Jesus announced that He was going to spend the day with him. The curious about Jesus became the companion of Jesus. And our text says that **“he welcomed Him gladly.”** **I ask this morning, would we have welcomed Him in the same way? Or would we make excuses as to why the timing of Jesus’ visit was inconvenient?** The house is a mess. There isn’t anything to fix for dinner. I have a bunch of errands to run.

Jesus knew full well the reputation of Zacchaeus and wasn’t concerned about what other people thought, His intention was to spend the day with him and to provide for Zacchaeus a greater wealth than any monetary accumulation of goods on this earth.

That Zacchaeus was forever changed by this encounter with Jesus is evident in his actions. Last week I said that good deeds do not produce righteousness, but rather good deeds come from being righteous. **“Look, Lord! (vs. 8) Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”**

Can I just say one word? DUH!!! He was a tax collector, of course he cheated people. The Old Testament Law stated that if you stole something you were to repay it four times the value. The

question isn’t if he had cheated anyone, the question was how much had he cheated them. There would be a long line of people to make amends with.

Now it wasn’t just by his actions that a change had taken place, verse 9 indicates that Jesus proclaimed that a change had taken place. **“Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too is a son of Abraham.”** Salvation didn’t come because he was a Jew, descendant of Abraham. Salvation was given because of the promise to Abraham that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. That blessing came through the person of Jesus who came 2000 years ago in the form of an infant and verse 10 gives us the purpose for His coming. **“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”**

Jesus wasn’t concerned with the condition of the home. He was concerned with the condition of the heart. Jesus came to seek him out and offer him the greatest gift ever. Zacchaeus was only interested in who Jesus was. Jesus was interested in who Zacchaeus could become. On that day Zacchaeus became wise because he realized who Jesus was and believed. He is the Savior.

Jesus used a title that spoke of the Messianic promise that a Savior would come. He was proclaiming Himself as the Son of Man to be the One promised in the Old Testament. Notice the twofold purpose of His coming. He came to seek. He came to save.

The word seek is in reference to seeking something in order to find it. In the Beatitudes Jesus said that those who seek will find. Also in the Beatitudes Jesus stated that our highest ambition should be to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We seek after a lot of things that have temporary value or importance. Maybe you are a Black Friday or Cyber Monday shopper seeking great deals. Maybe you are seeking a life

of ease in retirement. Maybe you are seeking for the dream job. The Bible says we are to seek first His kingdom.

In a parable that Jesus told He spoke of a merchant who set about seeking a pearl of great value and when he found it he sold all he had to buy it.

Romans 3:11 states that “**no one seeks after God**”, so Jesus came to seek for you. He could not seek for you from where He was, so He came from one place to another. The word stresses the act and not the arrival. He came with a purpose to seek for you and me to offer us His gift of eternal life.

But He didn't stop at just seeking for us. Our text notes that He also came to save. The word implies saving someone from perishing, to make well or whole; to restore. **At Camp I earned my Senior Life Saving badge. I was certified to rescue someone who might be drowning.**

In our current condition we are perishing because of sin. Salvation refers to the estate of someone who has been made whole. It is the work of God alone to save and it refers to three aspects of our life – past, present and future.

Concerning the **past**, salvation is the release from the guilt and the penalty of sin. **Romans 3:23; 6:23** are clear that I am a sinner and that sin deserves the death penalty both physically and spiritually. When a person is saved, he/she is no longer subject to the penalty of spiritual death, which is eternal separation from God.

Regardless of when I am saved, ALL my sin is forgiven, not just the ones from the day when I first believe.

My sins are gone
And will not be remembered
God in mercy tenderly forgives.
He lives within assuring my salvation.

Now concerning the **present**, salvation releases me from the power of sin. It no longer has me bound in submission to it because Christ's victory on the cross has given victory over the power of sin.

Romans 8:1-2 “**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.**”

Galatians 5:16 “**So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.**”

Concerning the **future**, salvation will release us from the presence of sin. **I John 3:2** states that when Christ returns for us, we will become like Him. The presence of sin will be eradicated. It will no longer be around to tempt us. We will be presented blameless.

Salvation releases from the penalty, the power and presence of sin. “**There is no salvation offered under grace which stops short of being eternal in its character. This is due to the fact that it proves to be altogether a work of God, and His purpose and power never fail.**” According to **Philippians 1:6** what He began in you will be completed at the day of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is still seeking those who are lost, knocking on the door of hearts today wanting to be invited in. **Has He been seeking you and you have put Him off? Will you open the door so that the two of you can enjoy fellowship together?**

The wise realize Jesus came to save.
The wise also realize Jesus came to sanctify.

II. THE WISE REALIZE JESUS CAME TO SANCTIFY –

I Thessalonians 4:3 “**It is God's will that you should be sanctified...**”

I Thessalonians 5:23-24 “May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.”

Hebrews 10:10, 14 “And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

Hebrews 13:12 “And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through His own blood.”

The word sanctify is translated into other forms such as to be holy or perfect. It literally means to be set apart. At creation the 7th day was set apart as holy for a day of rest. In Exodus the nation of Israel was set apart to God. Mt. Sinai was set apart as a holy mountain, Aaron and his sons were set apart from the rest of the tribes as holy servants to God. The word speaks to a person's position and relationship with God as being set apart from what is unholy.

Like salvation, sanctification speaks to three aspects of the believer's life. It speaks to the **past**. It speaks to the present and it speaks to the future. It also speaks to both our position and our practice.

When we speak about positional sanctification we are referring to that change in relationship that happens at salvation when we were once the enemies of God, but now we have become His children. We are the sons of God. **One author noted that “we are as perfect as He is perfect.”** John writes **“Children, now are you the sons of God...” (I John 3:2)** Practically speaking I'm working to become what I already am in position.

positionally I'm part of the team. Any team photos will include me in the picture. Any practices will include me. I'm on the team, but practically I have to work hard to hone my skills, to become a better player.

Simply put, positional sanctification refers to my being seen by God as holy and His shield, but I'm still far from holy in my practice, I'm still a long way from being like Him in character. I have to strive to live more like Christ each day.

Practical sanctification is a daily yielding of myself to serve God. **Romans 12:1-2** speak of a daily transformation that comes to a believer who submits his will to God's will. **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.”**

Romans 12:22 “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.”

God sees us as holy. Our task is to live in practice how God sees us. We do it by yielding to the Holy Spirit who will help us stay away from the sinful desires of the old nature which we have died to in Christ. But if we do sin, we are assured forgiveness from God who promised it upon repentance.

My position was fixed at the time of my salvation and according to **Hebrews 10:10, 14**, which we already read, that position was secured through the death of Christ. We have received a new nature. That is the past aspect of sanctification.

Let's say I make the basketball team. Now,

The **future aspect** of sanctification is what in theology we call ultimate sanctification. There is a time yet to come where God will make us sinless in body and spirit – forever.

Philippians 3:20-21 “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.”

I John 3:2 “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

We are waiting for the fulfillment of this position. It will occur when Christ returns.

Then there is also the **present aspect** of sanctification. That is the daily experience of growing in Christ, becoming like Him in character. It's what we call daily Christian living. The practical applications of Paul's writings always lead us to spiritual growth. Practical sanctification is a choice. As a Christian I will one day be like Christ, so does it matter whether or not I abstain from sin? Paul made it clear to the **Romans (6:1-2) “Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live any longer in it?”**

The obvious answer is no. As we stated earlier, God's will is our sanctification, to become like Him in practice or in conduct and character. The conclusion to the matter as John sees it is that since we have the hope of being like Christ one day, we ought to now be purifying ourselves because He is pure (**I John 3:3**), or as Peter put it to become holy because He is holy (**I Peter 1:15-16**).

The wise see that Jesus has come and delivered us from the practice of sin if we would but appropriate that power to our Christian walk. We don't have to

sin. We choose to sin. Sometimes it's willful and deliberate. Other times it's from ignorance, but that is still no excuse for sinning.

If I come to a door that has a low archway and I hit my head on it I may be ignorant of the sign that said “duck when entering”. I could have just missed it. But when I pick myself up off the floor and now notice the sign that says “duck when entering” and still hit my head on the archway, then I willfully choose to ignore the posted sign.

There may be something that I am doing that I don't know is sin until I read my Bible and find out that I was sinning. Now that I know, I have a choice whether or not to continue doing it. Practical sanctification will strive to eliminate the practice of sin in my life. It means that today I want to be more like Christ in character than I was yesterday and that tomorrow my character will be more like Christ than today.

The wise realize Jesus came to save.

The wise realize Jesus came to sanctify.

The wise realize Jesus came to glorify.

III. THE WISE REALIZE JESUS CAME TO GLORIFY – I Corinthians 15:35-57

This is similar to and overlaps sanctification in that it speaks to the future aspect of sanctification. This act of God makes us fit for heaven. In this present condition, the body has been greatly affected by the curse of sin brought on man in the garden. In this life the curse still possesses my body, but in the next life, I will be changed to something that is yet to be revealed. Scripture speaks of it as a mystery. From **I John 3:2-3** I like to say that *I'm not what I was and neither am I yet what I'm going to be.*

Paul speaks of this glorification as something that he continues to press toward to obtain. We have this assurance from **Philippians 1:6 “Being**

confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christi Jesus.”

About this time of glorification yet to come for the believer, theologian Louis Sperry Chafer writes “the transformed resurrected body will be limitless in power, infinite in glory, eternal in endurance, and adapted to the spirit. All this is assured both by unfailing promise and by incomprehensible rights through identification with the glorified Savior.”

When I had my recent back surgery, I had no guarantees that things would be better. The doctor could make no promises. But not Christ. When He said we would be changed faster than we can blink, and changed into something that is beyond our comprehension or understanding, it will take place.

Here are just a few of the benefits of glorification.

We have a heavenly citizenship.

We have a new relationship with God through the new birth. There is a kinship with the saints of all ages that will be eternal.

We have an eternal perfect standing that will not change, that is forever secure on the promise of the one who made it.

We have a new body.

We have freedom from the sin nature.

We will be like Christ.

We will share in the glory of Christ.

We not only will see Him, we will be like Him.

Hymn 551 – O to be Like Thee

O to be like Thee! Blessed Redeemer,
This is my constant longing and prayer.
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.

O to be Thee! O to be like Thee,
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art!
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

In the third stanza it says “Make me a temple meet for Thy dwelling; Fit me for life and heaven above.”

That's the work of Christ in glorification – to be made like Him. It comes through salvation, sanctification and glorification.

The wise realize Jesus saves.

The wise realize Jesus sanctifies.

The wise realize Jesus glorifies.

We aren't what we were and neither are we yet, what we will be. It's all because Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. This Christmas realize why Jesus came and be wise.