

Sermon preached by Canon Jim Holbeck on May 17 2006 at the Healing Service in St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney

Readings: James 1:1-8, 3: 13-18. Topic: *We Need God's Wisdom To Live As We Should*

A clever person once said that "*the only constant thing about life is change*". Things or people may come and go but change is always here. That's what makes it so hard to know how to live. By the time you've adjusted to one change the situation has changed already. Last week we looked at the trials and temptations that can come our way in life. We need to know how to face up to the changing circumstances of life. What we need is wisdom to know how to react or respond to those trials that come upon us. James in his letter gives us the answer.

1. GOD CAN GIVE US HIS WISDOM WHEN WE NEED IT. 1:5

It's in this context that James goes on to give us a wonderful promise. He writes that we can receive the wisdom we need to make the right decisions and choices. *1:5, If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

- It is not a natural wisdom of this world. It is a wisdom that only God can give.
- Wisdom isn't the same as knowledge. With knowledge you may know a lot of facts about a certain situation. But wisdom is knowing what to do with the facts we know and how to react or respond to the situations around us.

The people to whom James wrote must have been living in the midst of lots and lots of changes.

- For many it was the threatening clouds of persecution of believers that were building up day by day.
- It was the uncertainty of the future with their world out of step with God.

We face many changes in our lives as well, many trials and temptations to act in ungodly ways.

- It may be changing circumstances at work where we feel less and less valued.
- It may be changes in our family situations that bring us hurt and pain.
- It may be changes in our health that were unexpected.
- It could be anything that brings us stress and a sense of anxiety or even panic.

What can we do? Ask God for wisdom. What will be the result of asking? James gives 2 results,

i). God gives generously to all. He loves people to ask Him for wisdom.

God gave Solomon the choice to ask whatever he wanted as he became the king of the nation.

- Solomon asked, *1 Ki 3:9 Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"*
- We read *10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. 11 And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, 12 behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. 13 I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honour, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. 14 And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."*
- Solomon asked for wisdom to be a good and just king. God provided him with wisdom and with prosperity and the promise of a long life if he remained faithful to Him.
- He wants to give us wisdom to make the right choices in life as well.

ii). He gives it without reproach. He never reproaches us as we come for help. He takes us right where we are, and He begins to work in us, to guide us and to heal us, as we open ourselves to Him and to the wisdom He gives us.

2. GOD'S WISDOM COMES TO THOSE WHO TRUST HIM. 1:6-8

6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

As I thought about this description my mind went back to my experience in the Navy on an aircraft carrier. I watched Naval exercises being held in which planes were landing and taking off from another aircraft carrier. In good weather, the planes had no great difficulty in landing and taking off. However when a storm rose and the wind began to toss the ship around like a cork on the water, there was no way the planes could land on a pitching and rolling deck. There was space on the flight deck for the plane to land, but there wasn't enough stability for landings to take place.

- I believe that's what the person of doubt is like. He or she is being tossed around like the heaving deck of the ship. They lean to this way of thinking, "God can do anything", or to another way of thinking, "But this is a very difficult situation I'm in".
- Or "I know God has the power and compassion to heal", and "but why would He heal me?"
- Our minds are like the tossing deck, never settling down to let God's promises lodge and take root in our minds that we might act upon them.
- God gives wisdom to those who are humble enough to ask Him for it and who trust Him to give it.

3. GOD'S WISDOM IS DIFFERENT FROM HUMAN WISDOM. 3:13-16

3:15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

i). Earthly. Prov 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.* Earthly wisdom may look wise but is ultimately foolish. Eg., in an English University "Let's get rid of that Christian group because they persist in using the terms "men" and "women" which might upset the transsexuals." They practised intolerance to try to get rid of what they perceived as intolerance.

ii). Unspiritual (human). Natural wisdom. Eg. a young couple who came to see me. They were furious.

They had some issues in their marriage and had been to a Professional counsellor. He told them that they had a right to their own individual happiness. Forget about the relationship and move on and find happiness in a new relationship. They were angry because it wasn't what they wanted. They wanted their marriage to survive.

They began coming to church, got converted and experienced the love of God for them. They also experienced the truth in Rom 5: 5 "For the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is God's gift to us. They found a spiritual dimension in their lives through Christ that transformed their marriage.

iii). Demonic. Diabolical wisdom. Look at the so called "wisdom" of Hitler in seeking to make the world a better place by exterminating the people God chose to belong to Him as His special people. Then trying to build a master race in horrendous ways. Diabolically clever where diabolical means of the devil, demonic.

Other nations today where the leaders seem to be operating with demonic wisdom in destroying life .

God's wisdom is nothing like that. Look at v 17-18, *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

4. GOD'S WISDOM BRINGS US PEACE IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS. 3:17-18

What wonderful qualities mark the person who is humble enough to ask God for wisdom, and receives it.

The wisdom seen in them is pure. It is not adulterated. It is genuine.

It is *peaceable and gentle and open to reason*.

It is merciful and fruitful.

It is *impartial and sincere*. God's wisdom is tolerant in the right sense because it is based on the character of God and the love of God and not on human partiality.

God's wisdom makes a difference to those who ask for it and who live it out. *18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

Peace. Peace in the midst of tribulations and testings and trials in the changing circumstances of life.

Paul wrote to his friends in Ephesus. He wanted them to know God's wisdom. He wanted them to have a deeper knowledge of God. He wanted them to know all God had for them in His Son Jesus Christ. He wanted them to know God's power in their lives.

This was Paul's prayer that I would love to pray for you so that you might know those very same things.

That you might know the wisdom that only God can give you.

That you might know and experience God's riches for you in Christ Jesus.

That you might have a deeper personal knowledge and experience of His mighty power in your lives.

Eph 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Oh Lord, give us Your wisdom as we make the decisions we need to make, and as we submit ourselves to You as our Lord and Saviour, touch us in Your love and fill us with Your fullness, in Jesus name. Amen

Jim Holbeck