

## Epiphany 1 (Gospel) (2020)

It was silly and laddish, but we did it just the same.

When I was in theological college, I and some of my mates had a little skit we would go through. It worked like this.

You would meet someone in a hallway or in the library. He would fain confusion, take on a blank stare, and say, “Help! I n-e-e-d a priest!”

Then we would laugh.

Of course, we didn’t do it in front of school officials. That would have been bad form indeed! They might not have appreciated our humour and thought we lacked the gravitas necessary to be parish ministers.

But, this little exercise did provide comic relief. No doubt, we often did lack wisdom and would have profited from the guidance of a mature spiritual leader . . . though we probably would not have admitted it at the time.

The need for wisdom, I dare say, is a universal need.

When things are going our way, we don’t give this need much thought, but when they are not, when events overwhelm us, when uncertainty and trouble stalk our path, we found ourselves crying out something on the order of: “Help! I need a priest!”

Where do you go for wisdom?

I want to speak to you this morning on the subject of *Increasing in Wisdom*.

Let’s begin with Jesus. What about Him?

In today’s Gospel, we find His wisdom being manifested or shown forth to the learned doctors in the Temple. He was 12 years of age at the time. Luke 2:47 tells the response of these teachers of the Law:

**“And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.”**

And then later, at the end of the passage, Luke tells us: He **“increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”**

That word “increased” tells us a great deal. It tells us that as with any child there was growth and development. “Day by day like us He grew” . . . mentally and physically.

Wisdom for the boy Jesus was no static thing. It was progressive.

And we should not be surprised at this. Jesus, after all, was just as fully human as He was divine.

But, how did what theologians call “faith awareness of vocation” come about in the young Jesus? How did He come to know who He was and why He had been sent into the world? How did this understanding develop?

The short answer is that we don’t know, but develop it did, and at an early age.

Even at aged 12, He seems to have had an intimate, trusting and conscious relationship with the One He called Abba.

Notice what He tells His mother when she chastises him for not staying with other members of the family, resulting in Him being left behind in Jerusalem:

**“How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”**

“About my Father’s business,” He says.

And, of course, He continued on this track of being about his Father’s business right up to the end . . . right up to the cross from which He cried out, “It is finished.”

What can we learn about increasing in wisdom from Jesus? Allow me to highlight two things.

First, true wisdom is something that comes from God and something which must be actively sought.

In other words, it is divine in origin and doesn't necessarily fall into your lap.

I asked earlier: How did Jesus' awareness of vocation develop?

In answering that question, I would again have to say, we don't know. We don't for the very good reason the Bible is more or less silent on the matter. But it seems likely – reading through the lines – that it came in this manner:

- (1) Through reading and meditating on the Scriptures;
- (2) Through prayer, and
- (3) From the wise nurture He received from His Godly human parents.

I want to suggest that wisdom comes to us through these same channels: through reading the Bible, through prayer and through Godly associations. Let me tease out the middle one – prayer.

James in his New Testament Epistle is very explicit on what we need to do to get wisdom:

**“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”**

In times of perplexity, you don't have to walk around with a dazed look on your face saying, “I need a priest.”

No, there is a Scripture-appointed way of obtaining what you lack. James has told us what that way is. So has Jesus for that matter. In Matthew 7:7, He says:

**“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”**

No doubt Jesus as a boy did as He would later direct His followers to do. He sought wisdom from His Father in Heaven. He prayed at His home in Nazareth, just as he would later do in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to us crucifixion.

Okay, my first point is this: **Wisdom comes from God and it is something that must be actively sought. So, if you would be wise, get busy asking and knocking.**

My second point is: **From the standpoint of His divine nature, wisdom is not just something Jesus received, but something He *was and is*.**

What do I mean by this?

Well, just this: Jesus is that Wisdom that is from on high and is from all eternity.

That wisdom of which the writer of Proverbs speaks in chapter 8, verse 22:

**“The Lord possessed me [wisdom] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.”**

This verse and the chapter from which it comes suggest that Wisdom is a part of the inner-definition of who the one true God is.

Following on from that thought: Jesus as the Son of God shares in that wisdom. But, what does that say about us?

Well, this. If we are *in the Son*, as we were declared in our baptism, then what belongs to the Son now belongs to us.

Allow me to flesh this thought out fuller.

In the ancient world, a king’s subjects or people were seen as being *in the king*. What was true of Him was true of them. There was solidarity between the two.

If, for example, the king won a great military victory, they won it. If He suffered defeat, they suffered it. I think you get the picture.

Now, translate that thought into the relationship that exists between Jesus and His people. What belongs to our King belongs to us, including His wisdom.

Put another way, in Him, we are fully equipped for all good works.

Therefore, we don’t have to stumble around with a dazed look on our face saying: “I need a priest.”

We have One! Jesus is not only our King, but also our great High Priest, the One who represents us to the Father and the Father to us.

Of course, that does not mean we should not seek wisdom from those in the ordained ministry of the Church and from other godly persons. No, it is an ‘and-and-both’ proposition.

But the point I want you to carry away this morning is this:

**As a Baptised person, you have the mind of Christ. And there is no reason you should not be increasing in wisdom.**

You are not on your own in this world. You have untold resources.

What will you do with those untold resources?

It is possible to neglect them . . . to attempt to sort things out using your own human resources, and that is what we often do, isn’t it?

I am reminded of words found in one of our hymns:

Oh, what peace we often forfeit  
Oh, what needless pain we bear  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer.

I don’t know what is going on in your life this morning. But whatever it is, let me urge you to use the resources that are yours.

Breathe out doubt and fear and breathe in the wisdom and understanding that comes from on high.

Throughout the coming days and weeks, especially when fearful or perplexed, keep saying:

I have the mind of Christ.

I have the wisdom of Christ.

I have all the resources of heaven.

Therefore, I will not fear. I will stand and fight and dare.