

## Christmas 2

January 4, 2025



### PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Some have broken their heads over the meaning of the words of Luke where he says that Christ advanced in wisdom and grace, for they assume that as true God he possessed all wisdom and grace from the time of his conception. But (Jesus) grew continually and waxed strong in the Spirit, just as any other man.

– Martin Luther –

Martin Luther's Sermons

### 1 Kings 3:4-15

Solomon's place on the throne of Israel was the result of God's loving-kindness toward Solomon's father, David. Solomon confesses that he has no experience with such matters as those required of him to be the king, and he asks the Lord for wisdom and understanding so that he might be a fair and faithful judge for God's people. Solomon's request pleased the Lord, because the young man did not ask for wealth, longevity, or victory over his enemies but rather the gift of discernment to know God's will and his ways.

- What is the true value of the gift of discernment in the life of the believer?
- Solomon was known for his discernment and wisdom. Much of the Book of Proverbs is attributed to him. How did Solomon's fairness in judging reflect the gifts of discernment and wisdom?

Solomon claims to be just a boy, a youth who has no working understanding of ruling his father's throne. By his own reason and strength, he does not "know." So he prays for an "understanding heart" — i.e., the gift of spiritual discernment and wisdom.

It seems to be a common mistake in our culture to misinterpret intelligence as wisdom. A person can be very "book smart" and yet unable to solve even the smallest of problems. We see so much foolishness on television and in the news that it seems common sense and practical wisdom are no longer common.

- How does God use us even though we are foolish and unwise?
- Why does God's wisdom seem like foolishness to unbelievers?

### Psalms 119:97-104

The psalmist sings God's praises in this psalm that is focused on the Law of the Lord. He attributes his wisdom as being a result of following the Lord's commandments. Wiser is the psalmist than the elders who have lived a greater number of years, simply because he has attended to God's Word and his commands. "Through your commandments I gain understanding; therefore, I hate every lying way," he confessed.

- How do the commandments of the Lord bring wisdom to his people? Does that happen by anything we do (such as reading and meditating over his Word)? Or is it something else?
- Who is the wisest person you know? How did they become so wise? Are they a believer in God?

The psalmist describes a deep affection for the Law of God.

We might say, "I love Jesus' parables and stories about his life. I love the stories of the prophets of old." But the law?

- What is there to love about the Law of God? Why do we need the law (as well as the gospel)?

### Ephesians 1:3-14

God has given spiritual blessings to all who have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the earth. The word used here signifies just how long God has been planning this salvation: since before creation — before human beings even existed.

- How does this text prove that salvation is not the result of human work?
- How does it feel to know that God knew you before you were conceived, before you even existed?
- What does this say about our hope and faith, considering that we will also pass away from this world?

Scripture says that our chosenness is based simply on God's love for us. The grace we are shown in Jesus Christ is his own self-giving, unmerited and undeserved.

### Luke 2:40-52

Throughout Biblical history, we hear of God's wisdom at work in unlikely people. For example, a shepherd boy becomes King David. King Solomon assumes the throne as a young man. Even Jesus' inner circle of disciples is filled with unlikely characters. These are people that human wisdom would discount as unqualified or unwise, yet they are the ones God uses to reveal himself to the world.

As Jesus is mistakenly left in the temple by his parents, the gospel writer Luke remarks at how he was growing in wisdom. It seems uncanny to those gathered that this young fellow would have such a keen understanding of the ways of God.

Understanding of the ways of God like that displayed by the boy Jesus would be expected to come after a lifetime of experience and study of the Torah. The fact that Jesus had such a depth of wisdom and understanding as a child is a sign of his divinity as Son of the heavenly Father.

- Those gathered around were surprised at the unlikely young boy who exhibited such wisdom. Who has surprised you by their unlikely depth of understanding of the ways of God?
- This is our first glimpse of the process of the revelation that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah. What do we learn about Jesus and the ways of God from this glimpse?