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1 Kings 2:1-4, 4:29-34  
April 26, 2009

Modern medicine has done us many favors. One thing it has done, though, it has taken away what we just heard is the deathbed scene. Nowadays when somebody is dying, they are hooked up to machines in intensive care, very limited visiting hours, and if they have some moments of coherence, there is someone next to them saying, “Please live, please live.” Once upon a time, people knew that they were mortal and when they were dying, they would hold court in their home. Family and neighbors would come by to say good-bye and perhaps to receive a blessing. The person dying might say, “I would like for you to take care of my chickens” or to another person, “I forgive you for that terrible thing you did to me,” or to another, “Please forgive me for what I did to you. I have loved you so much.”

Solomon is portrayed in this passage as being wise. One of the things that he says that characterizes his wisdom is that he uttered Proverbs, “Wisdom knows how to say words that matter.” One of the things that you will witness in a few minutes...will be parents and their graduating high school seniors saying words that matter to each other. Words matter, they change things, and they do so in the house of God, is a sign of our wisdom. I love this passage, David is about to die and he sits down with his son, Solomon, and he imparts to him some wisdom. There are aspects of this passage we could toy with, one when David says, “Be a man. Be a man.” I remember when I was a little boy, people would say to me, “Be a man.” I wasn't sure what that meant. I think it meant “Be good at football” or “Lift up the hood and work on the car engine” or “Have a deep voice” or “Be hairy” or something. Be a man. And the question we could ask is, What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman? What does it mean to be the human being God made you to be? We have this wisdom, we can look to Jesus. Jesus was the perfect embodiment of what God calls each one of us to be, and the more we know about Jesus, the more we look at Jesus, the more we keep our eyes focused on Jesus, the more we know how to be a man, the more we know how to be a woman. It is hard in our culture to learn about wisdom. We've got smart people, we've got athletic people, we've got rich people, but who are the wise people? Turn on the television. Find me a wise person on television. When I was a little boy, there were some wise people on television. There was a show back then and we should resurrect this one. It was called *Father Knows Best* – the dads are nodding. Father was supposed to be a wise person, even in a silly show like *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Jed Clampett, because of his country upbringing, he was a wise person. He could look at Mr. Drysdale, a banker in California, and just expose him as the biggest fool – because he had some wisdom. Where is wisdom on television today? We've got – who've we got? – we've got Dr. House who is very smart but mean as a snake. We've got Jack Bauer – man, you watch 10 minutes of Jack Bauer, and there are 37 dead people. Then the clock is ticking, during the commercial break. We've got *American Idol*. I'd never seen *American Idol*, but we know somebody who is a close friend who has been an *American Idol*. So I turned this thing on. This has done such wonders for my soul. I'm so much closer to God...Where's the wisdom in this? I don't get it, I don't get it.

Solomon frittered away his wisdom and he largely did that because of the company he kept. One of the questions we don't ask often enough is whom do we hang around with and

why? Do we hang around with people because they're fun or because there're hopelessly successful, or do we ever hang around with people because they might help us to become wise? How do we structure our time? What are you going to do this afternoon? Let's do something that will be fun. Let's do something to catch up on my work. But do we ever structure our time saying, "Here's something we might do that would help us to become wise"? Wisdom. The wise look to the depths of things; they're not fooled by what's on the surface. The wise are not tricked easily. The wise detect hidden purposes in motivations. The wise have a holy patience. The wise see people the way God sees people. The wise.

I love the passage that says, "God gave Solomon largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore." Let's face it, we live in a culture that values narrowness of mind. These people who come on TV and the radio, they have very narrow minds, and they are very popular. But God gave Solomon a largeness of mind, a largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore. You may find yourself on a seashore over the next couple of months and when you're there, let me encourage you not to say, "Hey, it is cool, we're at the beach." Instead, think, "God gave Solomon largeness of mind, like the sand on the seashore." Look at the sand. You can never count all the grains. Get down on your knees and scrape away the sand on the surface, the little hidden treasures under there. Wisdom is like that. See the lapping of the waves, the immense horizon, the largeness of it all. We have a kind of reverence before the power of the ocean, this wisdom.

The passage said that Solomon talked about trees. Trying to think about trees, one of the problems that we have is we don't get outside nearly enough. We're inside too much or when we go outside, we walk around on paved things. But God would have us go out and see the things that God has made. St. Francis of Assisi loved to hug trees. He didn't hug trees to protect it from a developer. The reason that St. Francis hugged trees is that he looked at a tree and said, "This is something that God made a long time ago. It's been growing for a long time. I want to get the feel of what God has made. I want to get the hang of the texture of the kind of thing that God would make. If I get myself close to something that God made, then maybe I'm close to God." J.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* he thought a lot about trees. When he was a little boy, he climbed trees, he spoke to trees, he loved trees. In one of the great moments in *The Lord of the Rings*, he created some talking trees called "Ents" and they developed a peculiar language, a language of wisdom, I would say. He says that Entish is a lovely language. An Entish, it takes a long time to say anything. Therefore, we only say things that are worth taking a long time to say and to hear.

Wisdom, trees. Many of you who are graduating today, when you were children, your parents probably read to you a book called *The Giving Tree*. It's a story about a tree and a little boy who plays in the branches of the tree, then the boy grows up and he comes back and the tree gives him his apples and the tree gives him his branches and the tree gives him its trunk, and finally, there is nothing left but the stump of the tree. Finally, the boy comes back in old age and just sits down on the stump of the tree. Solomon spoke of trees.

Time. For the wise, time is not an enemy. The wise are never in a rush and to become wise, it takes time. I tried this week, in preparing for the sermon, to think of someone I know who is wise. And I remembered a man from the first church that I pastored when I got out of

seminary. He was a brick mason, and he was just remarkable. He always had an amazing calm about him. His faith was not superficial or easily swayed. He seemed to understand the depths of life, and I went to him one day and I said, "James, what is your secret? How could I become wise like you are?" Now, typical of a wise person, he was humble; he did not think of himself as a wise man. But I pressed him on this and he said, "Well, if there's any secret that has been helpful in my life, it's this." He said "I work hard all day and I come home and Peggy has made dinner for me and we eat dinner. We talk a little bit and then usually I have a few chores, but then after that, I usually have a couple of hours before it is time to go to bed. With those couple of hours, I go down to the basement and I pull out a peach basket and I turn it upside down, and I sit on the peach basket and for a couple of hours, I just think." I just think, I'll never forget it. He said, "Sometimes I put my head down in my hands like this, and I think." It made me wonder, What do we do when we've got a couple of hours before it's time to go to bed? You know, we watch Jack Bauer or *American Idol*, catch up on some work, get on the Internet, it's no wonder we can't name people who are wise. What we need to do is to think, to try to have a mind that's as large as the sand on the seashore, think about a tree.

I want to give you a gift right now. I have some more sermon stuff, and you'll have to take my word for it, it was really good. But I'm going to hold that for another week. The gift that I want to give you now is this, I want to give you five minutes just to sit on your peach basket there and be still, to think, to be quiet, to be grateful, to think about largeness of mind, to think about the age of a tree, to think about love, wisdom, just five minutes.

Silence...

Prayer...