

WISDOM IN THE CHAOS



Scripture:

Psalm 78:1-7

¹Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. ²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, ³things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us. ⁴We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

⁵He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children; ⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-16

(The Wisdom of Solomon is among the books of the Apocrypha. It is a Jewish work composed in Alexandria (Egypt) around the 1st century CE, with the aim of bolstering the faith of the Jewish community in a Greek world. In reference to King Solomon this book deliberates on the future reward of the righteous, sings the praises of wisdom, and, through a retelling of the exodus story, celebrates God's exaltation of Israel. The Protestant Reformers allowed that the books of the Apocrypha were useful for reading but did not include them in the traditional canon of the Bible.)

"Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her.

She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her.

One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty, for she will be found sitting at the gate.

To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding, and one who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care, because she goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought."

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

The Wisdom of Solomon is also called the Book of Wisdom.

I wrote a brief explanation about this book (on page one) to help you understand that this book is one of the books of the Apocrypha. The Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches all include the Apocrypha in their Bible readings. But our lectionary just occasionally gives this book as an option. So I chose the Wisdom of Solomon lectionary option this Sunday.

CHAOS AND DISRUPTIONS

We are all seeking wisdom, especially in the aftermath of the fires, trying to cope with a new reality we didn't expect.

Our whole country is still reeling from the tragic shootings that happened at the Sutherland Baptist Church. And we have not yet totally healed from the Las Vegas shootings. We have gone from the hurricanes that hit Florida and Puerto Rico, to the firestorm that hit us, while still being shaken up by the traumatic shootings and truck crash murders that keep happening in our country and others. The chaos and disruptions seem to be intensifying almost daily.

So where do we look for wisdom in the midst of this chaos? The Bible is always a good reliable source. About wisdom in the midst of chaos the Bible tells us to pray, to remember God's promises, to be patient during our trials and tribulations and to not give up hope and to not be afraid. God is with us in the midst of all this. God knows our troubles and our sorrows. And God is a trustworthy comfort who can give us a sense of peace that surpasses all understanding despite the chaos around us.

THE BIBLE'S WISDOM

Others have grasped onto this hope from the Bible's wisdom and worded it a bit differently.

**Shakti Gawain says this about chaos and wisdom:
"Times of chaos and uncertainty can lead to new doors opening, especially when we are willing and able to look for the growth opportunities in a situation rather than simply being overwhelmed by outside circumstances."**

OUR BELIEF IN GOD

An article on this topic by Bryon Pulsifer says, "The issue with chaos is to frame it within the confines of your mind so it does not overwhelm your thinking and your life. Life is rarely tranquil. The answer lies in our beliefs. What we believe helps to clarify, categorize and deal with the chaos of life.

Belief in God helps sort through all the miseries and problems for it is that belief that we are all creatures of God that helps us understand we can deal with chaos by turning our lives toward the Almighty Holy Spirit. With this determination, we feel at peace.

Once you are determined to control the chaos with the peace of Christ within you, each day becomes an opportunity to do what life demands. You can lead a life where you participate in the reduction of suffering or you can contribute to the suffering. Life is a calling you can embrace where chaos can be tamed and feel manageable, or you can despair and believe you have no impact on the suffering around you.

Do not let chaos and suffering rule your life. You have the inner ability to change how and what you think and these self-perceptions are just as strong as a powerful wind, or an earthquake.

"Peace is accepting today, releasing yesterday, and giving up the need to control tomorrow." Lori Deschene

Reframe your wounds into wisdom. Make the trauma an experience that taught you how to survive in a new way.

"In happy moments praise God, in difficult moments seek God, in quiet moments trust God, in every moment thank God."

Chaos can be a state of being where we make our greatest discoveries about who we are and what we are capable of doing. It's where we really come alive, if we're willing to lean into it.

It can be a place where we release the need to control everything around us. It can be a time to let go of the extraneous things holding us back from growth and adaptation.

Life is natural chaos. Our job isn't to create perfect order. It is to adapt, explore, create, expand, and evolve within the inevitable disorder of life. Accepting that life is chaos is a wise way to move forward in the journey.

ROMANS 12

I love the scripture used in Lew Gobble's service yesterday that described how he strived to live his life. In times of chaos it is good to center yourself on your faith and what you believe to be true. Lew liked the quote from Romans 12 that says, ⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

When your life feels chaotic, center yourself on passages like these that remind you how to behave and what you are to do to move forward. They are like touch stones that keep you on the path.

THE PRACTICE OF BEING REAL

Another way to stay on the path is to take the time to grieve and feel the pain of what is real. Fears and chaos can cause you

to deny the damage and hurt you are feeling. But that kind of denial will catch up with you eventually.

Mark Nepo describes this as "The Practice of Being Real." This practice includes unlearning the tendency to just absorb hits along the journey of life and pretend nothing has changed. Putting our energy into trying to maintain the pretense that nothing has happened to hurt us will eventually drain all our energy. But when we admit we feel hurt about the latest hit we receive in life, and when we practice being real about our pain or sadness, then the energy of realness helps us express truth. The expression of truth releases light and warmth allowing others to connect to us and provide support.

Helen Keller is one of my greatest role models of wisdom and resilience. She said, "When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us."

HUMAN KINDNESS AND HOSPITALITY

Helen Keller's family was originally from Ireland. Maybe it was her Celtic ancestry that gave her such a wise and compassionate brain. In the Wisdom of the Celts, it is understood that "the greatest wisdom is human kindness and hospitality."

Jesus taught hospitality and welcomed everyone to his table. The Celts believed hospitality was the core value for a successful civilization. Hospitality is the foundation of the other core values in Scotland: religious tolerance, unity in diversity, and equal rights for all which our nation was founded on, too!

An article by Carl McColeman on Celtic hospitality emphasized the wisdom of keeping two principles of hospitality that facilitate the ability to adapt to chaos:

The first principle is: Let things be imperfect.

The second principle is: Let miracles unfold slowly.

McColeman explained that this meant that you should be hospitable toward your imperfect self as you seek ways to cultivate hospitality in your imperfect world.

A BODY PRAYER

This wisdom of being hospitable to yourself first is straight from the Bible's command to love yourself. Loving your neighbor as yourself first requires you to love yourself. So today let's spend some time loving ourselves with a body prayer. This is adapted from the movements we are learning in our new Qi Gong class on Mondays at noon.

But instead of stating the words we do in Qi Gong, we are going to do a body prayer that will help us feel God's peace that surpasses all understanding in our body, mind, and spirit.

Please stand if you are able. Start with a prayer position. Feet stable in a strong stance. Shoulders relaxed. Take a deep breath.

Breathe in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Breathe out any toxins or bad breath in your body. Embrace God's love. (In Qi Gong she says to embrace the tiger, which represents energy. But God's love is even stronger than the tiger.)

Embrace God's love. Push outwards toxins, any bad feelings. Pull in God's grace and loving power. Push out the things that you must let go of: anxiety, tension, fear. Pull in God's peace, wisdom, and tranquility. Reach up to the divine power of God. Let God's light of hope shine down on you.

Back to prayer stance with gratitude in your heart. .

Let's do it again only with a flow now. Take a breath. Breathe in God's wisdom. Embrace God's love; push out anything toxic, bad feelings. Pull in God's grace and love. Push out anxiety, stress and fear. Pull in God's peace, wisdom, and tranquility. Reach up to the divine power of God. Let God's light of hope shine down on you. End with gratitude and thanksgiving.

Do this body prayer daily in the morning and before bed. Even if you don't move your feet much, it is still exercise. Your circulation will be more balanced and you will feel more of a flow in your system.

God wants you to be wise in the way you care for yourself and others. That begins with love: Love for God, love for yourself, and love for others.

May love be your path of wisdom as you cope with the chaos of life. Amen

Benediction:

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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