**16 Pentecost, Sept. 13, 2015; Prov. 1:20-33, Ps19, James 3:1-12; Mark 8:27-38; Rev Mary S. Trainor**

***"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.***" I often begin my sermon with these profound words--they are from Psalm 19:14, and we all said them together this morning as we read the Psalm. I memorized them some time ago, as they capture the thoughts and prayers of a person who is sharing God's Word and love with others -- of course, that is all of us everyday, not just your priest. We want our words and our hearts to be so turned to the Lord that we are filled with His Spirit, and are able to be His ambassadors. One of the words that describes what we are praying for here is: **wisdom**.

The word "wisdom" is found 234 times in the Bible, and is found numerous times in today's Scripture readings! It is an important word for Christian life. What is wisdom, how do we know if we have it, and how do we get it? Wisdom is defined as "**the ability to think and act using knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense, and insight"** (wikapedia). One Theologian *(J.I. Packer)* defines wisdom as "the practical side of moral goodness." Another pastor *(Rev. Bill Gothard)* defines it as "seeing life from God's point of view." In ancient Greece, the word *sophia* was used for "wisdom"...and this is why, in the Bible, wisdom is referenced as "she."  [Thomas Aquinas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Aquinas) considered wisdom to be the "father" of all virtues. In our culture, the people we often think of as full of wisdom are old people who have lived through a lot. But we don't want to have to be really old in order to have wisdom -- we all want it, and we want it now! We all want to be able to apply what we know in an astute way so we say and do the right things.

Last week, I heard a true story about a child who had wisdom. This child, who was about 4 and who had gone to church all his life, had begun to receive Communion. On a particular Sunday, the chalice bearer came to him with the cup saying the words "**The Blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation."** The little boy blurted out, "**No it's not. It's Jesus**!" The chalice bearer stopped, and looked at him in shock -- and then responded "**you are right! It is Jesus**."

Today, we are taught about wisdom in all of our Scripture readings. In the Proverbs reading, we learn that God's wisdom is available to us all for the asking. In it we heard God say, "***those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease.***" In the Canticle, we heard, "***Wisdom is a reflection of eternal light, a flawless mirror of God's activity, an image of divine goodness....God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom."*** Wisdom is glorious, highly desirable. Our Epistle readings lately have been from the book of James. James 1:5 says, "***If any of you lacks wisdom, let them ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given them."*** In other words, when you don't know what to do, God alwaysknows what to do, and He will tell you if you ask.  Our passage from James today acknowledges the fact that we don't have wisdom all the time; "***all of us make many mistakes***;" only God has the wisdom we need. One problem with Wisdom is that we often think we have it when we don't really have it.

Today's Gospel challenges us with the having the wisdom to recognize the true, full identity of Jesus. Jesus is trying to give the knowledge that the disciples need in order to recognize Him as THE Messiah....Peter is among them. We see Peter make the mistake of thinking he was wise when he wasn't. Peter thought he was full of wisdom when he took Jesus aside to tell him that He did not have to go through all of that awful stuff (i.e., be killed, undergo great suffering). Jesus' reaction was direct and critical, because Peter's mind was set ***"not on divine things but on human things."*** Peter's lack of wisdom was because he was relying on his own limited current understanding, instead of being open to and asking for God's wisdom. Peter was full of pride, and he missed out on the key to having wisdom that was right in front of him. We don't want to be like Peter was that day, and we don't have to be -- for Jesus is in front of us too.

A Christian author *(Kent Crockett)* tells this story: "When I was in college, I lived in a dorm that had 100 rooms, with a lock on each door.  Each of us who lived in the dorm had a key. It took 100 different keys to open those 100 doors. However, the person in charge of the dorm had a pass-key.  That single key had the ability to open the doors to every room in the dorm. Wisdom is like a pass-key, that will unlock difficult decisions and open doors for you.  The Lord is the only one who has the key, but He'll loan it to you, if you'll ask for it.

As you face your daily challenges, whether they be small (like where to park or shop) or large (like what to say to someone who hurt you, or whether to take a new job) God is available, right by your side, to give you wisdom to respond as He would have you respond. Take the time to pause and speak with the Lord before you act or talk, listen, and you will hear the guidance you need. The guidance to go ahead may come in the form of a sense of peace, and the guidance to not go ahead may come in the form of a lack of peace. God's guidance may come in the form of a word or a bible verse or a person. It is true that sometimes when we ask for wisdom, we don't hear anything back -- we try for the key, and nothing comes. This does not mean that God isn't there listening and loving us; God is always with us. When we sense God is silent, it means that we need to hang in there and have patience, and listen in a more intent way with even greater trust. Our times of challenge can be times of great closeness to God. The key is Jesus.

Let us pray together the words from today's Collect for God to help us turn to Him for wisdom as we face the challenges of our lives: "**O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever." Amen**.