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GOD'S WISDOM AND FAVOR IN CHRIST
 Luke 2:40-52; Christmas 2A; January 3-4, 2026

When I was in college preparing for seminary studies to become a pastor, I had a professor, Charles Froehlich, who taught New Testament Greek. One of his favorite Latin sayings was, *Verbum sapienti satis est*, which he then translated, "a word to the wise is sufficient." It was his way of warning us that what he was teaching was important and we needed to know it for the upcoming quiz or test.

The opposite of wisdom is foolishness. The saying warns against the foolishness of being unprepared for what you know is coming. A wise person will pay attention and be prepared for what is coming, in my case by studying and learning what was on the upcoming Greek exam. *Verbum sapienti satis est*; a word to the wise is sufficient-enough.

Today's Gospel Reading begins and ends with statements about Jesus' wisdom. "**The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon Him... And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.**" Sandwiched in between these two statements noting Jesus' wisdom is Luke's account of the twelve-year-old Jesus in Jerusalem for the Passover, where He showed His wisdom.

This Scripture teaches us what it means to have "God's Wisdom and Favor in Christ." God wants us to be wise in Christ, not foolish. Do you want to grow and increase in wisdom? I hope so! Listen then to God's Word; learn how Jesus grew in wisdom and what it means for you to grow in wisdom like He did. And, like Jesus, you will have the favor of God.

Jesus showed His wisdom while in Jerusalem with His family for the Passover. After Mary and Joseph left for home, Jesus demonstrated wisdom by being in the temple hearing and learning God's Word from the teachers of the Law.

Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when [Jesus] was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.

The Jewish Passover was the annual celebration of God saving the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and bringing them to the Promised Land. At the first Passover, Israelite families slaughtered a lamb and painted its blood on their doorframes as a sign that God's angel should pass over their homes and spare their firstborn sons from death. Then they ate the roasted lamb with unleavened bread, fed and nourished for their exodus journey.

In the Promised Land in Jesus' day, tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims would travel to Jerusalem each year for the Passover. A spotless lamb would be purchased, slaughtered at the temple by priests, and eaten in family groups celebrating that God was still their Savior. Being pious and faithful Jews, Jesus' family went to Jerusalem for the Passover every year. It was also at the time of the Passover that Jesus brought His disciples to Jerusalem one last time and instituted the Lord's Supper the night before He was slaughtered on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The Passover involved the slaughter of innocent lambs in celebration of God's salvation. For us to be wise we need to understand what Jesus was doing attending the Passover both as a child and later as a man when He died and rose again. God's Son came to the temple each year until it was time for Him to be sacrificed on the cross once for all as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. No more lambs needed to be sacrificed once Jesus did that. That is why we don't celebrate the Passover anymore.

Instead, Jesus gives us His body and blood to eat and drink in the Sacrament. We call on Jesus our Savior at each divine service by singing the *Agnus Dei*, "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us" (LSB 198). **"For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed"** (1 Cor 5:7b). Risen from the dead to live forever, Jesus is unlike the millions of Passover lambs before Him that were slaughtered and stayed dead.

Jesus's parents raised Him with the wisdom of attending every Passover of God's salvation. We show Christian wisdom when we attend the Lord's Supper often to worship our God and Savior.

Staying behind in Jerusalem after the Passover, the child Jesus showed what it means to **increase in wisdom... and in favor with God and man**. Mary and Joseph did not see it that way, at least not when they were desperately searching for Him. What was Jesus doing when they found Him? **“After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.”** The **teachers** among whom Jesus was sitting were teachers of God’s Word, what we call the Old Testament part of the Bible.

Jesus shows us how to learn God’s Word and gain wisdom. He was **listening to** their teaching. If we don’t pay attention to what is being taught, we cannot learn. The reason pastors preach God’s Word in sermons is to teach it. The pastor’s responsibility is to present God’s Word in all its fullness. It is the responsibility of you, the hearers of this Word, to listen to God’s Word preached with the goal of learning and remembering it.

Jesus showed wisdom in **asking questions**. How do hearers grow in their learning? They ask questions based on what they have heard. If we don’t understand what we have heard, we ask for it to be repeated or explained again more simply so we can understand it. We learn by asking questions that help clarify the teaching. Then we might restate in our own words what we heard and ask if we understand correctly. Those were the sorts of questions Jesus asked.

It has been said that there is no such thing as a dumb question, and that is true if the question is asked for the purpose of learning what is being taught. Some questions defeat learning. For example, if I am teaching God’s Word on the Lord’s Supper and you ask me what I had for supper last night, that does not lead to you understanding.

“And all who heard [Jesus] were amazed at His understanding and His answers.” How does the teacher know that the student-disciple has learned what was taught? The student can answer correctly. How Jesus learned involved all three of these: listening for understanding, asking questions for clarification, and answering correctly to demonstrate what He had learned.

You, the hearers of God's Word in church, need to do all three. You need to pay close attention as you listen to God's Word coming to you in its many forms: the liturgy of worship which is Scripture passages; the Bible lessons read; the Sermon preached; the hymns. This learning also needs your participation, not just in active listening, but also in responding with your voices. Learning takes place when we say what we have heard.

The parts of the liturgy given to the congregation to speak or sing reinforce learning to better understand what is heard. God's Word says we are sinners. We repeat this when we confess our sins. God says we are forgiven. We confess we believe this with our spoken "amen" after we receive forgiveness. God reveals who He is and what He does for us in His Word. We confess our faith when we join in speaking the Creeds. We join in the prayers, psalms and hymns which are all answers to God in faith to what we have heard and learned.

Asking questions to learn better is a good thing, but please don't do it during the sermon or service. That would be disruptive to me and the whole congregation's ability to hear and learn. After church or in Bible classes or Sunday school it is very appropriate. If you don't understand what I am preaching and teaching, ask me about it; the issue is probably that I need to teach and preach more clearly, which I need to know as your pastor.

The boy Jesus increased in wisdom but also in favor with God. To have God's "**favor**" is the same thing as living under His "**grace.**" Grace and favor are the same word in the New Testament. As we increase in God's wisdom in Christ, we grow in our understanding of how gracious God is to us in His Son. Jesus told Mary and Joseph that He had to be in His Father's house to carry out God's business, which is forgiving sinners by the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. By hearing and learning this in God's Word Jesus was wise beyond His years. He was preparing for His final test as a man.

Verbum sapienti satis est; a word to the wise is sufficient. Jesus' final exam on the cross was coming, and He was going to be prepared for it. Amen.