

The Virtue of Wisdom

By Scott Runyon

First Baptist Church of Birmingham

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1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

SERMON

Last week, we talked about the virtue of kindness and how the world can pivot on kindness. At the end of the service we had the opportunity to hear stories of acts of kindness from strangers.

We have heard the idea of random acts of kindness, but kindness doesn't need to be random. It can be our way of life — a lifestyle of kindness as people of faith who are committed to live like Jesus.

Instead of being random, it becomes our intention to live that way. In fact, being kind can simply flow out of who we are as people of faith.

Today is the middle of a three-week series on virtues. Perhaps clarifying what a virtue is might be helpful.

A virtue isn't something that is done for its own sake, or solely for the person taking the action. Virtues, instead are bigger. They have a ripple effect beyond us and shifts the status quo of the

environment. Virtues actually create something new in the world that wasn't there before. Virtues have impact! Virtues have power!

So, it wouldn't really be virtuous to mow your lawn, or to make your family dinner.

But if you mow a neighbor's lawn because they recently had surgery and were not able to themselves, or you made dinner for people who are homeless and didn't have food, these can be acts of generosity and kindness that go well beyond a selfish interest. These are virtuous.

Today we are considering the virtue of wisdom. **Wisdom is noted by the soundness of an action, decision, or choice while applying experience, knowledge, and good judgment.**

The virtue of wisdom.

Shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned an expedition westward to explore and chart newly acquired lands to the west. The main goals of this expedition was to pioneer travel routes and establish an American presence there before the British or other European countries could claim the land.

They were also tasked with

documenting the area's native plant species and animal life, and to create maps of the geography. Jefferson also wanted to develop trade with the Native Americans who lived in this land they were exploring.

So, beginning in 1804 Lewis and Clark took off from St. Louis on this mission to discover the new lands in the western United States.

In North Dakota, they were in need of help to navigate the waterways of the Missouri River and they wanted help communicating with some of the local native tribes. So they hired a man named Touissaint Charbonneau and one of his wives, Sacagawea, who at the time was a pregnant teenager.

They figured they would work their way west on the river all the way to the Pacific Ocean. This plan was going along quite well for a time ... until, that is, they encountered the Continental Divide.

They were surprised! Instead of a waterway to the ocean, they found themselves staring at the ominous and completely unexpected Rocky Mountains.

Louis and Clark could have doubled down on their rowing speed and skill to see if they could blast through, but of course they determined the mountains would

get the better of them.

No, they needed to completely retool their whole approach and find a new way forward that didn't involve a canoe.

This is the position of the Church in today's world. We need to find a new way forward rather than relying on the old ways that served us well in the past. We are now facing the Rocky Mountains and the canoe, while very effective in the past, is not effective in this new terrain.

We need to adapt to our current new environment.

King Solomon also faced the "Rocky Mountains" as he was taking the throne of his father, the great King David. Listen to the story.

READ 1 KINGS 2:10-12; 3:3-14

Solomon knew that the pattern of the past under the reign of his father, King David, would not work as the pattern for the future. His father had ruled and did things his own way. Now Solomon needed to craft his way forward for the sake of the people for whom he was now responsible.

To do this, he knew that he needed wisdom that took him beyond his

own self interests.

When people think of King Solomon, they think of his unsurpassed wisdom, an amazing gift from God.

He didn't desire wealth or fame for himself, but wisdom in order to rule well for the sake of the people. This kind of wisdom is virtuous!

Of course, God was so pleased with his request that Solomon received wealth and fame as well.

Being a young man, I'm sure that Solomon must have felt overwhelmed by his sudden power and the scope of his responsibility that impacted the lives of not only the vast numbers of people in his own land, but also the lives of people in the surrounding kingdoms.

Being handed this responsibility caused him to pause, instead of moving him to puff out his chest and absorb the glory of kingship for himself.

Do we, in this culture, seek knowledge and education, high level degrees, and status, while at the same time neglect the wisdom needed to live well for the sake of others?

We might reflect on how wise it is

to neglect the widow, the poor, and the foreigner in our midst — those most vulnerable and in need.

Wasn't this exactly what God expected in both the Old and New Testaments from God's people? How easily we forget when we are surrounded by the messages of this culture that values acting for personal self interest.

We have often abandoned the core value of selfless service as part of God's family in favor of bolstering our own reputation and wealth.

Aren't justice and compassion the values not only spoken about but embodied and lived by Jesus? And isn't the wisdom that Jesus showed by his words and life what we are called to imitate? We, as people of faith, need wisdom to chart our course forward.

Back to our story of the Lewis and Clark's expedition. Remember that they were canoeing along looking for a river access to the Pacific Ocean and found themselves staring up at the Rocky Mountains.

They were doing great with the canoes. In fact, they probably had become expert canoeists. These vessels moved them quite a long way along their journey, but they discovered that when they ran out of water, they had to abandon their

canoes.

In order to move forward, they had to let go of their theories and knowledge about how they would get to the Pacific Ocean, and find a new way.

At that crucial point, they relied on Sacagawea and other native people who lived in that area that was new to them. These people knew the terrain.

So, they abandoned their canoes and traded for horses that could climb the mountains.

They continued on a journey that was harder than any of them ever imagined, but they made it through — all the way to the Pacific Ocean — because they were humble enough to learn from people who lived there, and knew the terrain.

This was wise!

The virtue of wisdom in our day and time would have us consider several questions and then follow through with action on the answers we find:

1. What canoes do we need to abandon in our church?

2. Where do we buy horses, the vehicle that will take us the next

leg of our journey?

3. Who are the native peoples in this community who can teach us of the terrain that we must navigate in new ways in this current day?