

THE QUESTION - Week 2

Ecclesiastes 1

¹⁴ I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. ¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted. ¹⁶ I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." ¹⁷ And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

Monday, January 10

How much do you know? I remember when I was in college, one of my professors was blind. He taught in the Bible department, and I took a number of courses from him on the Old Testament. Being in his class was a treat. He loved scripture, and he was passionate about it. We called him "the wheel", because he would get so excited teaching that he would spin around. Because he was blind, we had to make an audio recording of all of our papers. We would hand in the typewritten copy to his teaching assistant, but he would listen to our papers. Then when our recording was over, he would record a message of his own and also give us our grade. Now, one thing I learned from this professor was the power of knowledge. If you have ever seen a book written in braille, you know how large these books are. To accommodate letters made of dots punched onto paper, the books are large and cumbersome. Often, our professor would bring his braille books of the Bible to class. But most often, he came without them because it was too difficult to tote them around. For this reason, he committed vast portions of the Bible to memory and would quote chapter after chapter in class. One day a student asked how he could memorize so much scripture. He said: *I do not have the privilege of forgetting.* If we forgot a phone number, we could look it up. He could not, and he knew it, so he never forgot. Now, this week we look at the limits of wisdom and knowledge.

Here's our text for today:

Ecclesiastes 1:14-16

¹⁴ I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. ¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted. ¹⁶ I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."

Remember from last week, the writer of Ecclesiastes, sometimes called the preacher or teacher, decided to do a thorough study of life in our world, what he calls life under the sun. His purpose was to find the meaning of life, to find what would provide him with ultimate meaning. There is a wonderful story that connects King Solomon, the likely writer of our book, to the whole topic of wisdom. His father, David, was immensely successful in uniting the people of Israel. He was also successful in battle. Now, with the kingdom well established, the people needed a different sort of leader. The Lord came to Solomon as he was beginning his reign and offered to give Solomon whatever he requested. Solomon might have asked for great wealth or great fame, or even great success, and the Lord would have granted his request. But instead, he asked the Lord to provide him with wisdom so that he might lead well. At this point in Ecclesiastes, the teacher asks whether pursuing wisdom will open the way for meaning in life. This is something we have come to believe. We are tempted to think that education is the solution for all of the ills of society. Education is helpful for us, but it is not in our learning where ultimate meaning can be found. The teacher tells us first that everything under the sun, everything in our world, is empty. He is not discarding wisdom or learning as unimportant. He is telling us that it is not ultimate. Actually, knowledge can become a trap for us. How so?

First, we can become so puffed up with knowledge and so enamored of our own wisdom, that we cannot really learn. This is sometimes called the curse of knowledge. We think we already know it

all, and so we are not teachable. We can no longer grow. We lose humility and get stuck. This is meaningless. Those that know the most, should be the most humble. You would think that, in the process of learning, they would be even more aware of how much they do not know. Actually, at the time of Jesus, there was an entire religious movement based on acquiring secret knowledge. These people were filled with pride and assumed that their knowledge would bring them up to God. They were sadly mistaken. Second, there is no end to knowledge and the pursuit of wisdom. You will never reach the end of study and books and learning. We hear this statement later in the book: *Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.* (Ecclesiastes 12:12) I can vouch for the joy of learning but also the weariness of it. I read one or two books a week and, for every book I read, there are three or four more I wish I had time for. But the end is usually weariness. It is work more than fun, and it can be exhausting. This is not where we will find life. Third, knowledge does nothing to change those things we know about. We can learn all about cancer, but that does not mean we can cure it. Learning does not automatically lead to solutions. It can, but often does not. The promise of learning is that we think it leads to solving. Again, this is not the case.

Now, I want to go back to my professor. On our final exam on the book of Psalms, he asked us to record three psalms from memory and write a brief commentary on each psalm. It was then that most students realized though they studied, there was much they did not know. How many psalms do you know from memory? How much do any of us really know? Yes, the limits of our knowledge should lead us to God, to worship, to acknowledging his glory. Here is Paul from the book of Romans:

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! -Romans 11:33

Yes, all that we might come to know, all the wisdom we might accumulate, will not reveal to us the mind of God and the purpose of our world. Yet, in Christ, all is revealed for us to see. What we would not achieve or know is made known in him.

Let's pray:

Lord God, only wise and all-knowing God. Forgive us for our pride and our foolish ways. We've made a YouTube video to explain everything in our world, but we have missed you. Point us to Jesus as we consider the question of our world. Show us afresh that he is our wisdom. In your name we pray. Amen.

Tuesday, January 11

It is a fun little exercise to try with a friend. Ask your friend to tell you the name of the song that you tap out with your fingers on a table between you. Here's why it is fun. Your friend is not likely to notice even the simplest song. It is even more interesting because this will be a great surprise to you. Here's why. As you are tapping out the song, you are hearing it in your head, making sense of the rhythm. It makes sense to you and actually seems easy. But your friend has no idea what is going on in your head. They can only hear the tapping. They have little idea what song you have in mind. As we learned yesterday, this is called the curse of knowledge. Because you know the tune, you assume others will know it as well. Now, this week we are looking at wisdom and knowledge and why we cannot find ultimate meaning and satisfaction in life.

Here's our text for today:

Ecclesiastes 1:14-16

¹⁴ I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. ¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted. ¹⁶ I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."

Now, there are a number of things to notice about the teacher's words. First, as we learned yesterday, the pursuit of knowledge can lead to pride. Notice in this section of the text how many times we hear the word "I." I have seen everything... I said in my heart... I have acquired great

wisdom... My heart has had great experience of wisdom... While we learned that was true for Solomon, is this cause for pride? Should not knowledge lead to humility, and wisdom to one being more reserved? The teacher is revealing his heart and what has happened to him in the process. There can be a problem when you think you are the smartest person in the room, even if you are the smartest. This is often where the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom leads. We hear this in the condescending voices of scientists or politicians and preachers as well. You can see how it can be difficult to learn when one believes that he or she has nothing to learn from others. But there is something else about knowledge. It doesn't matter how much you know if your topic is unknowable, undiscoverable to you. What do I mean? Imagine Macbeth going on a hunt for Shakespeare. He is living in the story Shakespeare wrote, but he won't find Shakespeare there. Yes, there may be traces in the nature of the story, but he is nowhere in his story. That is what it feels like to pursue knowledge and wisdom as a way to get to THE ANSWER, to the meaning of life. We are listening to the tapping sounds, but we just cannot figure it out. This is something we cannot change, as hard as we may try. There is a crooked way that cannot be made straight, or better put, a hidden way that cannot be revealed by our effort. It is true that the creation reveals the glory of the One that created it, but it does not render to us the answers we seek. Remember, the teacher has checked out everything and found it to be vanity, empty, bubbles, and a chasing after the wind.

Now, here's the thing and how the book can help us. The gospel, the message of God in Christ coming to our world, gives us the music below the tapping, you might say. We could never figure out the song ourselves, and then Jesus shows up. He not only gives us the tune, but he sings the song. He lives in accordance with the music beneath everything in our world. We are still trying to figure it out, and Jesus has come. This is the only music that makes sense of the story we are living in. It is only because we were created by God that we are wired for joy, for beauty, for goodness. It is only because there is a music beneath our world that we are trying to find the answer. If we were the product of mindless natural forces, would we take such an interest in truth, in a search for meaning? You see, Ecclesiastes may be the most depressing book in the Bible, but it is also the most hopeful. Would we be searching, if there was no treasure to be found? If something had not be lost, would we be seeking to find it? So, even our search for knowledge points to how God made us, and that God made us to live in a world pregnant with meaning and bursting with glory. This is why we experience awe, why we enjoy traveling to discover new places, why each of us seems to be born with a homing beacon in our hearts with an aching desire to find our way home, why we love to see mysteries solved. We are living in such a mystery ourselves, and we long for the riddle to be solved and for the fullness of a life of meaning to be enjoyed. This is why Jesus came and what he has invited us into. This is what he meant when he said: I have come that they might have life, life to the full. (John 10:10)

Let's pray:

Everlasting God, we're cramming our heads with information. We so quickly forget what we have heard, and even our knowledge slips away over time. What we are missing is you. Guide us to see our purpose, and enable us by your Holy Spirit to lead lives of freedom and joy in the purpose you have for us. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Wednesday, January 12

A few years ago, Diane Sawyer was conducting an interview on the TV program 20/20. The woman was named Jill Price. As part of the interview, Sawyer asked Price a number of trivia questions from broadcast history. For example, "When did CBS air the 'Who shot JR?' episode of *Dallas*? When was *All in the Family*'s baby episode shown?" And so on. Price is spot on with every answer. She not only gave the date for the final episode of *MASH* but describes the weather that day. The most remarkable moment came when Sawyer asked Price when Princess Grace died. She immediately answered, "September 14, 1982—that was the first day I started 12th grade." For once, it seemed Price had it wrong. Sawyer laughed nervously and gently corrected her guest: "September 10, 1982." Price misunderstood what was said and thought it was another question—the possibility that she might be wrong never registered. No, Sawyer says, Price made a mistake; according to the book that 20/20's producers were using as a source, Princess Grace died on September 10. Price stood her ground, and not 60 seconds later, the producer broke in

with the words: "The book is wrong." It was true, Price had answered correctly, but their sourcebook had been wrong. Knowledge is a wonderful thing, and that is what our text is about today:

17 And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. 18 For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. -Ecclesiastes 1:17-18

Yes, the teacher of Ecclesiastes set out to grow in knowledge and in wisdom. The truth is that he was willing to be an idiot if he could find the meaning and purpose of life. He was searching for the answer to the world's most important question. Remember our teacher set out to look the world over, to leave no stone unturned to find his answer. Could he, in gaining knowledge of the world and wisdom for life, find the answer? Would more information, more data, help him? Perhaps, we feel this is true. If we knew more, life would make sense in our world. Our hearts could be at peace. We could know our purpose and find satisfaction in our lives. This is what the teacher set out to do. As we have learned, Solomon was one of the wisest men in the world. Here is what scripture says about his wisdom:

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, 30 so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all other men..., and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. 32 He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. 33 He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. 34 And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom. -1 Kings 4:29-34

He was the envy of the nations. People came from all over to seek his wisdom. But when he sets his mind to use all his knowledge and wisdom to untangle the question of meaning, he comes up empty. As he has told us, the answer is not to be found under the sun, in the closed system of our world. Now, today, we would be the envy of Solomon. We have access to more information and wisdom at our fingertips than he could imagine. We too have come to trust our knowledge to give us life. It is true. Knowledge can be helpful. Understanding the human body so that we can deliver medicine, having the knowledge to treat diseases, this is a wonderful gift. This knowledge is precious. But, even here, with the highest of our knowledge, we are earthbound and stuck. Wikipedia and YouTube open up vast storehouses of information and wisdom. This knowledge base is growing at an unimaginable pace. As of one year ago, over 500 hours of new videos are posted every minute. You would never be able to watch them all, and the amount of content is growing so quickly, you could never catch up. During this podcast, thousands of new hours of content will be added. Here is what the preacher said: *For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.* He said that in the end, with all the knowledge he accumulated, it only troubled him more and more. It was miserable business. Indeed, ignorance is bliss.

Let me tell you more of Jill Price's story. She answered all of Diana Sawyer's questions, not because she has studied to learn these things. She has a brain condition that causes her to remember everything she has seen or heard or experienced. She not only knows the date the last episode of *MASH* was aired. She remembers the weather outside at the time and everything that was in the room where she saw it on TV. You might think that this is a wonderful gift to have. But the heaviness that comes with it has filled her life with grief. She remembers every horrible thing said to her, the word of every argument she has ever had. She remembers the date of every plane crash, every natural disaster. Yes, there is a weight to knowing. In a sense, ignorance is bliss. Knowing every disease a human being can contract is overwhelming and can whip up fears and worries about every ache that a person feels. Often prodigies live with depression because to know so much brings with it a heaviness that can be difficult to bear. This too is a chasing after the wind. Now, here's the thing, in Christ, God overturned what we human beings think wisdom is. He used death to bring life, the cross, to redeem you and me. He took the foolish

things of the world and used them to shame the wise. This is the good news of the gospel. Salvation is not based upon what we know, but what Jesus has done. Often the simpleminded are in a better position to receive grace because their knowledge, and the pride that accompanies it, doesn't get in the way. It is because Jesus is the wisdom of God that we can have peace and joy, and we can come to know the meaning of our lives.

Let's pray:

All-knowing God, your ways are so much higher than our own. Your foolishness is wiser than our wisdom. Enable us to rest in you, trusting you for what we do not know and cannot understand. To the praise of Jesus our redeemer. Amen.

Thursday, January 13

Each year the US Memory Championships are held to determine the person with the best memory in the country. Just to qualify, the contestants have to memorize 117 names and faces in 15 minutes, and memorize as many digits as they can within five minutes. Those digits are organized in rows of 20 digits, with 25 rows on each page. Then they are given a deck of cards with the cards in random order. This event is timed with a stopwatch. They must memorize the order of the cards; then they are given a fresh unused deck that they must put in the order of the first deck they studied. Finally, they have to memorize an unpublished poem. Then they must reproduce the poem as it was given to them, all the words, the punctuation, the spelling. Everything. Ok. I am exhausted just thinking about this test, and it is just the qualifier. Now, the fact that some people can complete these tasks amazes me. I can cross the house, and, on the way, forget what I was in search of. How can they memorize pages of numbers? In the ancient world, memory was the primary tool of education. We are told that when Augustine came to faith in Christ and started into ministry, he asked to take a year off from the work so that he could memorize the entire Bible. His superior only gave him a summer. So, Augustine memorized the entire New Testament. We use our brains in different ways, but we understand the mission of the teacher of Ecclesiastes.

Here is what he said:

Ecclesiastes 1:17

And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.

As we have learned this week, he thought he could, with knowledge, solve the riddle of the meaning of life. But this was just not possible. One reason for this is in the language the teacher uses. He lives what he calls "under the sun." That is, our world is a closed system. We can learn about everything in our world, but we cannot know what lies outside our world unless someone reveals it to us. So, if we want to know God, or the ways of God, or the purposes of God, we're going to feel stuck. We can only know God if he reveals himself to us. We also cannot know the reason God made the world and us, how he made us, and what our destiny is. All of those explanations come from outside of our world. God must come to us and reveal himself and his truth. Now, of course, we might assert that our world is some sort of cosmic accident, and that we are here by chance, but there is no way to prove that either. If we believed that, we would have to explain why there is something rather than nothing. This is the gospel of which scripture teaches. First, we see God revealing himself to various people. To Abraham. To Samuel. To David. To Sarah. To Moses. And so on. They only know the Lord as he makes himself known to them. At one point, the Lord explains this to Moses. He says:

God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. -Exodus 6:2-3

Yes, the Lord did not reveal himself to the patriarchs with his personal name, only Moses as we are told here. It is only by revelation that we can learn God's purpose in all that he has made and done. We learn of God not because we can gather knowledge. Our knowledge cannot pierce the

veil between our world and God. God must make himself known. Of course, he has done this in Jesus. Here is the book of Hebrews explaining:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. -Hebrews 1:1-3

Yes, only in Jesus we can come to know the true and living God. He reveals to us the person of God, the character of God, and the plan of God.

Now, I want to return to the US Memory Championship for a moment. After the contestants make it past the qualifying round, one of the three memory tasks they are given is this. They have 15 minutes to hear and review facts about six strangers such as name, address, phone numbers, pet's names, hobbies, cars, and favorite food. Then they are given an oral exam to test what they remember. Here's the thing, these are only facts about these strangers. They do not come to know them personally. They hear about them. You see, we do not simply want to know about God and his plan. We want to know him personally and to live in his plan. That is also his purpose. Yes, we might pass a knowledge test but still not really know God. This is why the Christian faith is like nothing in the world. First, God comes to us and reveals himself to us. Second, he comes in person so that we can really know him. Here are the words of Jeremiah the prophet:

Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴ but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord... -Jeremiah 9:23-24

Let us pray together:

Holy and gracious heavenly Father, we could not know you, but you have made yourself known in Jesus. You have come to us and for us. Lead us, we pray, by your Holy Spirit that we might live out of your purposes for us and our world. For we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Friday, January 14

This past summer, my family was in the mountains of North Carolina. One day, one of my sons organized a long hike down a very tall mountain. The hike led us along steep cliffs and sheer rock faces. It wound through dense trees. At one point, we were shocked that the hiking trail led straight across a large cow pasture filled with curious cows. In the middle of that pasture stood one lone immense tree. It was living, but its shape seemed strange. The major trunk rose high into the sky, but the branches were amazingly few and thin. It wasn't until we passed the tree that it all made sense. While the tree was living, the entire interior of the tree and one side was missing. No doubt, struck by lightning standing alone in the cow pasture, it did not die. But half of the tree was missing. I love that as a metaphor because this is the way our knowledge works. It looks to be very much alive, and it really is. But it is incomplete. Something at the core is missing. Perhaps, we see it as we did that tree and do not realize it is flawed. Incomplete. That is, until we can see it a little from the backside, the side of faith. Here is the Apostle Paul describing the situation from 1 Corinthians 13.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. -1 Corinthians 13:12-13

Yes, these verses come from what is often called the great love chapter. The King James version puts it like this: we see through a glass dimly. In other words, we don't know it all. We can't even fully see the world we are living in. It is like we are stumbling in the dark, bumping into the furniture crossing the house. This is life in our world. We will always be growing in knowledge, but our vision will never be fully clear. You see, in our modern world we have a deep belief in the power of knowledge, and that we can come to know anything and everything. We also trust that

knowledge is the way to human salvation. We can solve the ills of society, and the challenges that face humanity, if we only learn and know more. It is true that learning and science have done much to improve human life. Medical discoveries have extended lifespans, cured dreaded diseases. But it is also true that there are limits. Human beings cannot live forever in our world as we know it. Also, there are some problems that lay beyond the realm of our solutions and answers. For example, we know that our world could not emerge from nothing. It had to have a source. There had to be a cause that got our world going. Much of science accepts the big bang theory behind the appearance of our universe. But we cannot see beyond the veil. We cannot, through our knowledge, see who caused the big bang, who got our world started. We cannot pierce the darkness. Yes, we see dimly as through a glass. The light is dim enough that some will even deny it exists. They may even deny that God exists. There is enough evidence that we propose faith in God, but not enough to prove his existence. As we have said, we are like Macbeth in Shakespeare's play trying to prove that Shakespeare, the writer, exists. We know that he must or there would be no story, and we would not have the life we know. But we cannot get to him. Whatever Macbeth knows about the story he is living in, he cannot know it all. Nor can we. We have the tree as we saw in the cow pasture, but when we get a good look at it, it is hollowed out. It is alive but incomplete. This is the world we live in. This is why, at the same time that knowledge is powerful, it falls short of what we desire to understand the meaning of life and to know God. Psalm 19 explains it like this:

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. ² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. -Psalm 19:1-4

Yes, the starry skies point to a designer, a creator. But notice this speech pours out. The picture is of an immense amount of water pouring from a mighty river. Night after night there is more and more information. It is gushing. An overwhelming waterfall of information never coming to an end. Actually, the message is that there is just too much. Yes, the more we know, the more we know that we don't know. One answer leads to three more questions. We are not reaching the end of the journey. But our problem isn't that we don't have enough data. We have more than enough, but we still lack the answer to the problem of meaning. This is something we need to come to see. It is not because we don't know enough that we do not know the meaning of it all. The immense amount of data may actually get in the way. This is how the teacher of Ecclesiastes comes to his conclusion. He's gathered all the data but is no closer to the answer. That is why it is wearying to him. You just cannot get there through knowledge.

The good news is that, as Paul says, a day is coming when the fog will lift. Now, we know this part. When that day comes, we will come face to face with the God that made us. Everything will be perfectly clear. This is why Jesus came. To reveal God through his love. This is why this teaching comes at the end of the love chapter. It is love that shows us God and shows us the way to God, or better put, the way God has come to us. Jesus has brought life and love to light in all that he has done.

Let's pray:

Loving God, your word says that you extend your love to thousands upon thousands, not because people are deserving. No, it is because you are love. Pour out your love into our lives in Jesus, so that we will have joy in confidence in the days you provide to us. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, January 15

One day, one of the greatest physicists, Albert Einstein, was asked if he believed in God. His answer revealed how difficult he believed the question to be and a hint of what he believed. He said:

I am not an atheist. The problem involved is too vast for our limited minds. We are in the position of a little child entering a huge library, whose walls are covered to the ceiling with books in many

different languages. The child knows that someone must have written those books. It does not know how. The child dimly suspects a mysterious order in the arrangement of the books but doesn't know what it is. That, it seems to me, is the attitude of even the most intelligent human being toward God. We see the universe marvelously arranged and obeying certain laws but only dimly understand these laws.

I like what Einstein has to say because he is humble. He knows science has not replaced faith. He knows that we only know so much. We cannot see everything or know everything. We can see enough to perceive order and laws at work in our natural world. Our world had to come from somewhere. There are laws that govern it for a reason, even if we don't know the reason.

Now, this week we have been following Ecclesiastes chapter one and the journey the teacher is on to find ultimate meaning. We have learned that the teacher is brilliant. He possesses great wisdom and knowledge. But even he cannot get from here to there, from our world to God. We cannot know the ways of God unless he reveals his ways to us. Here is Isaiah speaking about this:

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.
9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. -Isaiah 55:8-9*

We see this especially in the gospel of Jesus. First, that God would enter into our world is breathtaking. He knows all things and fills the universe, but he chose to walk among us. Talk about making connection and about revealing himself to us. In Jesus, God becomes visible to us. Flesh and blood. Then there is the cross. Brutal. Senseless, really. But God uses the senseless in our world to make sense of everything in our world. As the message of the cross went out into the world, it was considered pure foolishness, a joke really. God would never bear the shame and defeat of the cross. God would never redeem the world in this way. Jewish people were offended by the idea and thought the gospel the height of blasphemy. Greeks would not even discuss the cross in polite company. You see, we would never come up with this. It would never be our way. Victory, yes. But, defeat? Not a chance. It was utter foolishness. Only from one outside our world, only from God himself, could such foolishness become wisdom. So, the teacher was right. In all our wisdom, we haven't made sense of our world and found the meaning of life. We continue seeking, but it can only be revealed and understood through the power the Spirit of God. Here is the apostle Paul explaining:

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. -1 Corinthians 2:14

As Einstein said: *The child knows that someone must have written those books. It does not know how. The child dimly suspects a mysterious order in the arrangement of the books but doesn't know what it is.* Only God in Christ brings it all to light, revealing the mystery, showing us the book of God, the wisdom that rests at the foundation of our world. I love the way C. S. Lewis explained this. He said it like this:

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.

Let's pray:

God, we are humbled by the glory of our world, the world you created. We see the starry sky, and yet we can only know a fraction of its immensity. We see the complexity woven into the human body, and we are amazed. In our learning, help us to worship you. Thank you for making yourself known to us in Jesus. To the praise of your name. Amen.