

Matins: 3rd August 2015

Watchword: “Be very careful, then, how you live-- not as unwise but as wise.” (Eph 5:15)

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18: *I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siege works against it. Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded. The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.*

Dear friends: Wisdom belongs in the 1st Article. It's a matter of law and things given: "Do this and you will live!" (Lk.10:28) Holy Scripture is full of praises for wisdom and love for it: Philosophy/Wysbegeerte. And people do a lot to attain it. The Queen of Sheba travels with her entourage to hear the proverbial wisdom from king Solomon and it's not just worth her travelling troubles, but she pays impressive amounts of gold and jewellery to share in it too.¹ No question: Wisdom is worth a lot – and it's not only interesting, but saves lives – entire cities/nations. And the lack of wisdom costs dearly. Think of the sacking of Troy, the demise of the Inca's and fall of Rome.

What is wisdom? Depends on the situation. Innovation and thinking on your feet is required. Especially if the calamity is there, knocking on the door – and you've got nowhere to run! Remember that prostitute Rahab in Jericho. She was a lot wiser than the authorities in control. She saved her own life and that of her family. You'd call it street-wise.

Clever people sometimes lack wisdom however. Wisdom is not just about IQ, but has connotations of decency, honour, grace, kindness, humility. Most and first of all true wisdom depends on fear of God. That's the crucial ingredient of wisdom. It's very foundation and platform. Not just with Solomon, but I believe also in the true great leaders of all times – like for instance Moses and Joseph. And even in the most powerful leaders of nations and empires the lack of wisdom leads to their ultimate downfall.

¹ From all nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom. (1Ki 4:34 NIV)

And she gave the king 120 talents of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. (1Ki 10:10 NIV)

The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, (1Ki 10:14 NIV)

King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. (1Ki 10:23-24 NIV)

Verwoerd – the architect of apartheid -, Hitler, who annihilated Germany in less than 2 decades, Pol Pot, Stalin, Mao Tsetung, Gaddafi, Osama ben Laden and I'd even add Mugabe – lack considerable elements of wisdom in their megalomaniac attempts at restructuring society into some fascist or socialist utopia. Oh, yes, they all promised paradise here or later, but they brought hell millions of those, to whom they had made the big promises. I think economists and bankers were found lacking too during the financial crisis: Spend now, pay later! The crash proved them wrong and caused many to fall into terrible debt and dire destitution of desperate poverty. I also believe that biologists/geneticists and other engineers of humanity and forms of life – abortion, so-called positive and negative eugenics and euthanasia - today need huge portions of wisdom not to lose sight of what is right, dignified and truly wise. In our terms: good, meet and salutary! See the problem with our life is that it's not just being reeled off in some isolated laboratory and doesn't happen in the protected, safe and quarantined environment of a scientific experiment. No – there are just too many unknowns, unpredictabilities and uncertainties – out there in our real world. Even the computers with their huge and impressive ability to address enormous calculations can't figure them all out. Example: Waterholes in KNP.

The voice of reason is often drowned by the mighty shouts of rulers/power/weapons of war/sin: Thuli Madonsela, Theo Venter or even Desmond Tutu.² The voice of godly wisdom and truth also fights a war which takes no prisoners and will last to the very end.

Wisdom starts with the fear of the Lord: God is alive – in control – he is judge/final and definitive – he is also the source/content of life/good/perfection. He has also set certain boundaries: You shall honour father & mother! You shall not kill! You shall not commit adultery!

Aufklärung/Enlightenment: Sape audere! (Kant): Dare to think for yourself! Gott ist tot (Nietzsche) The god delusion (Richard Dawkins)^{3 4 5} Dan Brown and his "Da vinci code" –

² Bonhoeffer, Thomas Moore, but also John the Baptist & Johann Huss

³ "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." — Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion

and other gnostic rubbish. We are left to our own devices. Answerable to no one, but ourselves and the battle cry: "Survival of the fittest!" We are thus in the temptation to act like God - Übermenschen – come under the dreadful illusion of having to tread on those who have fallen or are perceived as being below us: "Untermenschen! Dalit's = Untouchables; Cockroaches, vermin, Basarwa – No-People! Revolt of Nature (Dialectic of things) leading us to nihilism, absurdity of being. It's a frightful cul-de-sac, truly a dead-end.

Jesus Christ says: *Here is more than Solomon. Whoever hears my words and does them is like a wise man, who built his house on a rock. When the storms came...*

- Miracles & Wonders:
 - Miraculous fishing – Trusting God's calling and command
 - Feeding 5000 (True wisdom!) – Trusting God even in the desert.
 - Healing the ill and raising the dead – (Dr Boehmer: Healing symptoms or the real cause?)
- Justification of Sinners
 - Forgiveness of sins
 - Gospel for the poor
 - Effective words – creating out of nothing. Just words!
- Suffering, cross and dying
 - Vicarious satisfaction: Ancient – and almost forgotten magic!⁶
 - Life out of death
 - Glorious exchange!

⁴ "There is something infantile in the presumption that somebody else has a responsibility to give your life meaning and point... The truly adult view, by contrast, is that our life is as meaningful, as full and as wonderful as we choose to make it." — Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion

⁵ Religious faith, for Dawkins, is above all a sign of faulty thinking, of ignorance; he wants to educate the ill-informed out of their mistakes. He sees religion, as he once put it on Twitter, as "an organised licence to be acceptably stupid". (<http://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/jun/09/is-richard-dawkins-destroying-his-reputation>)

⁶ C.S. Lewis in Narnia: "deeper magic from before the dawn of time". Death of that lion (not Clive), but Aslan (the Lion of Judah): "will resurrect an innocent killed in place of a traitor".