

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

You know, I used to think I knew enough to come in out of the rain. Of course for more than 40 years, I've run through rain, thunder storms, snow, ice, didn't matter. Well, I no longer do that, instead I walk. Through rain, thunder storms, snow, ice, 45 degree below zero wind chills. Oh, I'm dressed appropriately, but apparently I don't know enough to come out of the rain since I walked through rain this morning.

When I was young, a teenager and even before that, my dad used to share various things with me from his own life, quite often because as he would tell me, he didn't want me to make the same mistakes in life that he did. Well, I'm sure that as a teenager, I was able to convey an attitude of complete and utter boredom with what he was saying. It really was just attitude though, because I did listen to him. And for the most part I haven't made the mistakes he made. I made my own.

I never particularly thought that I was wise, possessed of any particular wisdom, but I would listen to those who had more experience than me, think about what they said and did, and steal the best of what I liked and respected. Now in each succeeding decade of my life, I've realized that I've had my act together a little bit better than the previous decade. I'm still relatively hardheaded, and of course I can excuse it by pointing out that I'm Norwegian, but the good thing is I do actually know what wisdom is.

Wisdom is what you and I do every day, day in and day out, in and through Christ, as shown by our actions, our words, our lives with other folks, knowing that we are created to be in community, that we can bear one another's burdens and in so doing ease the load on each one of us.

Notice I said we're created to be in community, not created to be in conformity. Oh, we want to be individuals, to be different, we say that's obvious in the way we dress, what we drive, where and how we live, where we vacation, and so on. But the truth is that we often want newer niftier cars, great vacations, wonderful homes. So we worry. We worry about our health, our relationships, we worry about our finances, we worry about work, lack of work, retirement, our families, even our medications. We want to be independent, to stand on our own two feet, to be rugged individuals, and as a result we become more like one another all the time.

We labor under heavy burdens, some self-created, some imposed by outside forces such as society, the secular world. Burdens of finance, burdens of health, we have enough for tomorrow, but do we need to worry about long-term care, will we be able to afford it? We labor under a load of guilt, we should have done this, we shouldn't have done that, we wish I hadn't said that, if only we'd have said this instead.

Jesus tells us that wisdom is vindicated by her deeds, so that when we hit rock-bottom, when we simply can't go on, remember Jesus. Jesus, God Incarnate, knows

what it is like to grieve, remember his grief for Lazarus? Remember his care for his mother Mary as he hung from the cross giving her to John to care for as he gave her John as her son. Remember his torment in the garden, his frustration with his disciples, his anger in the temple, his pity and concern for the people who were like sheep without a shepherd. Remember his cry from the cross, "why have you forsaken me?" Jesus knows heavy burdens, he carried the burden of our sin. And wisdom is going to Jesus who died for you, who rose for you, who saves you by grace through faith.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Every now and then I catch myself thinking, worrying about, planning for the future. As I should, after all God gave us brains and common sense that we might use them, although not for worrying. More often I find myself thinking about the future, not the future in this earthly sense, but the future when I am with God, when I have been taken home, when my restless heart finds the rest that it longs for. I realize that Jesus is with me, walking beside me, leading me, carrying me (think "Footprints in the Sand"), laughing with me, consoling me, and giving me hope.

Baptized, fed at his table, saved by faith, knowing that whatever I go through in this life, it's nothing compared to the glory to come.

Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds, so what is wisdom? Wisdom is knowing Christ, serving Christ, living in and through Christ, living for Christ, saved for eternity by Christ and knowing it by faith. Wisdom is accepting his burden, which is not really a burden at all.

As I was preparing for my weekly Bible study on the book of Matthew, I came across this quote in a commentary by R. C. H. Lenski, who quotes Luther: "Christ's burden does not oppress but makes light and itself bears rather than is borne."

Brothers and sisters, wisdom is vindicated by her deeds, and the best deed of all is to take Christ's yoke upon us and learn from he who is gentle and humble in heart, finding rest for our souls.

AMEN