



Isaiah 11:2

Advent 1, Nov. 30, 2025
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And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

There's a legend told about Socrates, the great Greek philosopher, that goes like this: One day, a proud young man came to Socrates asking for wisdom. He walked up to him and said, "O great Socrates, I come to you for wisdom." Socrates led him down to the sea and took him chest-deep into the water. "What did you say you wanted?" Socrates asked. "Wisdom, O great Socrates." Socrates placed his hands on the man's shoulders and pushed him under the water. Thirty seconds later, Socrates let the man up. "What do you want," he asked again. "Wisdom!" the man sputtered. Socrates pushed him under again, thirty seconds, forty seconds, and then let the man up again. "What do you want, young man?" "Wisdom!" came the reply. Socrates repeated the routine once more. When the man was let up for air again, Socrates asked, "What do you want?" Gasping, the man shouted, "Air!" And Socrates concluded, "When you want wisdom as you have just wanted air, then you will begin to find wisdom."

We all desire wisdom. We've all met people, usually older people, that we consider very wise, that are good sources of wisdom and advice, and we yearn to possess such wisdom too. The problem is, I think we all possess more knowledge than we do wisdom, which isn't saying much. And there is a difference. Knowledge is knowing things, understanding things. Wisdom is taking that knowledge and using it, applying it, making use of that information.

Wisdom is like a football coach seeking to learn everything about an upcoming opponent. He studies the game film, making note of their offensive tendencies, when they like to run, how often they pass. He breaks down their defensive schemes, noting how they line up against particular formations, how frequently they blitz on different downs. He scours the opponent's injury list. He frequently checks the weather updates for the upcoming game. But having all that knowledge wouldn't be helpful unless he took that information and then utilized it in his game strategy. Wisdom is taking acquired knowledge and then *applying* it, acting on the basis of accumulated knowledge.

And we're just not very good at that! Really, we have two big shortcomings when it comes to wisdom.

1) We don't know enough, and we don't really care to learn more. **2)** Even when we do know something, we don't apply it properly. Thus, we are fools, we lack wisdom.

If we were wise, then we would seek to learn more. Our Bibles wouldn't sit there at home gathering dust, serving merely as symbols of our Christian faith to any visitors. God's Word is that fount of heavenly wisdom and knowledge that He has given to each of us. If we are ever unsure about what is right and wrong, all we have to do is peer into the pages of infinite wisdom given to us from above. If we're ever feeling lost, seeking answers, reassurance, God has lit a lamp shining in a dark place for us *in His Word*. And more often than not, we're just too lazy to take a look, or maybe we just don't care enough! Or maybe we want to think that we know enough without ever actually looking at what God says. Or perhaps we're worried that God's Wisdom will contradict *our* understanding—what we *want* to believe. We need to desire this Wisdom from God the way a drowning man desires air, and we just don't have that desire.

And on the other side of the problem, even when we do have knowledge from God's Word, we are terrible at applying it. Like when a young man is struggling with things he sees on the screen. He knows it's wrong, he knows it makes him feel terrible, and yet he does it anyway. Or a wife, hurt and enraged, knows that the words that are about to come out of her mouth are unkind and are going to make matters much worse, but she says them anyway. Or the child who knows that what he is about to do is the opposite of what his parents told him to do, he knows he will get in trouble, but he just can't resist the temptation and does it anyway. That's exactly what we are like. We are fools!

And then our foolishness is compounded. Through our lack of wisdom regarding God's Law, we dig ourselves into a deep dark hole of guilt and despair. And *because* we are so foolish, we convince ourselves that we can get out of it! We show our profound lack of knowledge and wisdom by imagining that a holy God can be cheaply bought by our empty promises, by some futile and short-lived efforts to try to appease Him. We are *fools*.

What we want is wisdom, and that's the very thing we lack entirely. And that's why the first "O" Antiphon for our consideration this Advent pleads for Jesus to come to us as our Wisdom:

***"O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High,
Pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things:
Come and teach us the way of prudence."***

In this antiphon, Jesus is addressed as Wisdom itself. Not just that He *is* wise, as if wisdom was just a quality of Jesus, no, He *is* Wisdom! He was the one speaking in our Old Testament reading from Proverbs, Wisdom personified. Wisdom that was there at the beginning, Wisdom that was behind all of creation. And we can easily see the wisdom of Christ in the creation of this universe.

I always think that if I were in charge of creation, we would have two types of trees—the type of tree that looks like a broccoli and then a triangle tree on a little brown square. But Jesus, in His Wisdom, created tens of thousands of different trees, not to mention the different plants and mammals and birds and sea creatures. If I was in charge of creation, I would have probably forgotten about something like friction or gravity, and everything would just go flying off in all directions. But Christ Jesus created the laws of physics, showing perfect wisdom for how everything should function. And that's not to mention the immense complexity in just our bodies—the way our eyes work, collecting so much information and then immediately transmitting that information to our brains which respond without delay. Or our DNA, that genetic code within us that contains infinite information. As Christ ***"mightily order[ed] all [these] things,"*** His wisdom was on full display.

And here's the amazing thing: Having that infinite wisdom, being Wisdom Himself, Christ put that all aside in order to become small like us. That's what our text is describing. Isaiah is prophesying about the one who would come to be the eternal King from David's line, and then he writes, ***"And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD."*** That idea is referenced later in Luke 2, ***"And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom."*** (Luke 2:40)

Christ Jesus, the eternally wise God, chose to become a man, coming to us through screaming pain,

birthed by a woman in a barn stinking of manure and laid in a feed trough. He knew what that would be like, and He chose it for Himself. And then, having emptied Himself by becoming a man, He needed to grow and learn, to be filled with wisdom. He studied God's Law, filling Himself with the knowledge of what the Father required, and then He applied it, executing it perfectly. He read the prophecies about Himself and then went and fulfilled them at just the right time and in just the right way. He learned and understood what He must go through in order to buy us back from our sinful foolishness, and knowing exactly what was coming, He went and applied that knowledge, marching into Jerusalem to be betrayed and crucified like a common criminal.

And if you're wondering why someone so wise would choose to go through all of that, it was all because of you. It was all *for* you. Paul wrote in our epistle reading, ***"And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption."*** (1 Corinthians 1:30) Christ came to be the Wisdom that you and I lack so profoundly so that we might become righteous in Him. We need this Wisdom like we need air to breath. And we know where to find this Wisdom. It's written for us here, in our Bibles.

You know, there's two groups of people that when we read about them in Scripture, their lack of wisdom frustrates us. I'm thinking of the Children of Israel and the Apostles.

The Israelites needed to learn wisdom in the wilderness. They always only knew what they could see in that moment—that they were being pursued by the Egyptians, that they had no food, that they had no water. And constantly, they were coming to the conclusion that God had led them out of Egypt to be killed, to starve, to die. They had forgotten what they had learned, what God had told them. They had forgotten God's promises. They were not going to God's Word where God had *told* them what the outcome would be. He said He would bring them to the promised land, and there He would send the promised Savior. If they had fed on the Word of God, then they would have known that He had not brought them out there to die. And they would have known that to the Creator of all things, the wilderness could be no obstacle for providing food and drink.

The Apostles also suffered with the same foolishness. And so, they were distraught when Jesus had been arrested, they tried to fight back, they ran for their lives, they went into hiding behind locked doors out of fear. They thought all was lost! Even when told that Christ had risen from the dead, they said things like, ***"Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."*** (John 20:25) But Jesus had been with them, He had spoken to them the words of Wisdom, had told them clearly, ***"That the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."*** (Luke 24:7) If they had turned to that heavenly Wisdom that had revealed to them the secrets of the Kingdom of God, then they would have known that despite all earthly appearances, the victory had been won, that Jesus would live, and that they would live also.

And I think the reason these people frustrate us so much is that deep down we know that's exactly what we are like. We are fools. We constantly lose sight of God's promises, judging the events of our lives only by what we can see. We often make foolish and ignorant judgments without seeing the whole picture, failing to apply Wisdom through sheer ignorance and open rebellion.

But Christ Jesus is Wisdom from on high. If we are going to be wise, we need Him to come and teach us, to share His Wisdom with us by pouring out upon *us* the Spirit of Wisdom. And that is exactly what Jesus came to bring for you.

We don't know enough and we don't apply what we do know, but Jesus knows and Jesus did. He is perfect Wisdom, come down out of heaven for us. So, listen to Him, trust Him, feed on His Word which tells you, "Your sins are forgiven," "Your foolishness is replaced with My wisdom," "I am your life," "I am your salvation." We need that Wisdom more than a drowning man longs for air to breathe. And we can find that Wisdom in Bethlehem's manger; we can find that Wisdom on Calvary's cross; we can find that Wisdom in an empty tomb; we can find that Wisdom in God's own book of Wisdom.

And so, we pray:

***"O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High,
Pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things:
Come and teach us the way of prudence." Amen.***

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7) Amen.