

A Spiritual Spring for the Week

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Sermon Text: Psalm 119:33-40
Sermon Title: "Wisdom from Only One Source"

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{SLIDE 1} Psalm 119 is a long psalm. It covers 176 verses and would take quite a bit of time to read. Psalm 119 is meant to be read little by little, not so much all the way through without stopping. The reader reflects on the words, and how they draw him or her closer to God. The reader allows the words to penetrate his or her heart, so that the reader may feel the presence of God. The reader may know that God is giving instruction, always teaching, always leading, never stopping to be our holy Guide.

Psalm 119 is concerned about wisdom, receiving wisdom so that the reader may know God more deeply. It is through wisdom that a person may know the ways of God. It is through wisdom that a person may hear God's voice and follow.

We sort of talked about this last week. Psalm 119 begins with the declaration that one is blessed who walks in the way of the Lord. One is blessed who keep the decrees of God, who seek the Lord with their whole being. One is able to walk in God's ways because of Jesus Christ. Christ shows us how to walk with God

and remain blameless. Christ shows how to do no wrong and not be put to shame. We learn to keep the Commandments of God. We praise God for the upright hearts within us. We remain steadfast in our faith, in our relationship, with God, and all of it done in Christ.

{SLIDE 2} Now, how do we know this? Do we know Jesus Christ just through osmosis: somehow the knowledge of our Lord magically appears to us? Do we just think positive thoughts and there it is, clear as day? There has to be a way to know about Christ and receive wisdom from God. That takes place through our reading of Scripture. God's word tells us about God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, and our relationship with our Three-in-One God. God's word tells us how human beings have fallen away from God, gotten themselves lost in a sea of sin, but how God has been reaching out to us from the very beginning, showing us the way to salvation. God's word teaches us how to live in God's way, how to delight in God's way, how to be in God's way for the rest of our lives. No other book, no other resource tells us about God except the Bible. We know nothing about our God and Savior unless we crack open the pages and read.

{SLIDE 3} I'm going to throw some Latin at you.

Sola Scriptura.¹ Sola means *only* or *alone*. Scriptura means *Scripture* or *the Bible*. “The Bible alone” or “By the Bible alone.”

About 500 years ago a man by the name of Martin Luther was concerned about the Church he served. He was concerned that those in charge, especially the Pope, were making things up as they went along. They would declare some holy decrees that the people had to follow, and they could argue against it because the Pope said so. The people had no evidence to contradict what their leaders said. Yet, Martin Luther found the evidence and it was in Scripture. He read Scripture and discovered that what the Pope and Church leaders decreed were wrong. They completely contradict what God’s word says to everybody. So Luther said that it is the Bible alone that tells us about God and how we should believe God. The Bible alone opens us to all the things God wants us to know, and it is only through Scripture that God reveals himself to us. Luther said, “The true rule is this: God’s Word shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel can do so.”² Luther also said this, “A simple layman armed with Scripture is greater than the mightiest pope without it.”³

¹ This is one of the five *solas*, the others being Sola Fide (by faith alone), Sola Gratia (by grace alone), Solus Christus (by Christ alone), and Soli Deo Gloria (glory to God alone).

² Martin Luther, *Smalcald Articles II*, 15.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_scriptura#cite_ref-10.

{SLIDE 4} So the Bible is very important to us. It is THE book, the only resource, we turn to in understanding who God is and who we are in God's sight. If we want to know how to forgive, we open up the Bible and God will teach us. If we want to know how to love, we crack open the pages and God reveals love to us. If we to understand service and prayer and worship, it is all in the Bible, and God wants to show us. If we are not sure how to have a godly heart and put on a godly mind, God's word will uncover the steps we need to take to get to our desired goals. If we hope to share God's message of salvation, it is all there, in God's word ready to be being us light. God's Word establishes our faith. We want to know, we must open God's word.

{SLIDE 5} Actually, this idea of Sola Scriptura did not originate with Martin Luther. Even the psalmist in Psalm 119 knew about the Bible being the only resource we turn to to see what God is revealing to us. If we want wisdom from God we turn to Scripture.

“Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statues.”⁴ One is taught God's statues by reading the law of God, or the Bible during the time of Psalm 119. There were those who studied Scripture day after day, and they

⁴ Psalm 119:33.

were known as scribes and rabbis. They learned something about God through God's word, and then they taught God's word to others. Along the way, both teacher and student may know what God reveals and may observe it "to the end."

"Give me understanding that I may keep your law."⁵ We learn that wisdom is gained by reading God's word, and then we gain more wisdom from God as we continue to engage God's word. We see the path before us because God's word opens it to us. A little later in Psalm 119 it says, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."⁶ God speaks through his word, through the Bible, and the path of life is opened to us just a little bit at a time, so we may see it, discern it, and then walk it. We turn our hearts from selfish desires, from "vanities" as Psalm 119 puts it – arrogance, pride, egotism, emptiness, pointlessness; God's word give us the wisdom to turn from these things and choose to live the life God gives us.⁷

If we desire to gain wisdom, if we want to know how the world works, if we want to know how God works in the world, turn to the Bible. Take it off the shelf or the coffee table. Separate the front cover from the back cover: in other words, open the Bible. And

⁵ Psalm 119:34.

⁶ Psalm 119:105.

⁷ Cf. Psalm 119:35-37.

read it. Read it prayerfully. Read it as God's letter to us, showing us all the mysteries of life that we need to know.

{SLIDE 6} Speaking of mysteries, one of them is how life was formed. How did we become human beings? How did the universe begin, let alone our solar system and our planet? Scientists explore this all the time. They look into Darwin's writings about evolution. They study the stars through telescopes, and try to figure out what the celestial bodies are made of, and they stipulate from there how life came to exist. They study fossils and rocks, and they try to piece together a picture of when earth began and life started to walk upon it.

{SLIDE 7} We turn to God's word, and what is revealed to us is that God created all things. God had it in mind to give birth to a universe, and place moons and stars, galaxies and nebula within it. God had it in mind to shape us and mold us in such ways that we can know God intimately. We may discover who God is and live with our God forever. The Bible, God's word, doesn't discuss carbon dating to reveal how old things are. The Bible doesn't talk about molecules and where they came from, or even elements and what their atomic weights are and how they interact with

each other. The Bible does reveal to us wisdom about a God who cared to create us. God's word reveals to us a God who continues to create, to mold and shape his universe for its eternal good. The universe belongs to God and God will constantly care for it, God's word tells us this. God will redeem all things, and all things will share in the glory of God.

{SLIDE 8} Another mystery is our human condition. We seem so limited, so fragile. We are not as perfect as we would like to be. No matter how much we practice or study, we will stumble, we will choke, we will not do everything without error. People have always wondered how we can combat our limited condition. Will enough education solve all the world's problems? Will the right kind of thinking, maybe even the right kind of government, place people on the path toward perfection? I just finished watching the last original *Star Trek* episode, aired in 1969. There was the next generation and the latest *Star Trek* movies directed by J.J. Abrams. *Star Trek* speaks of creating a world without poverty or despair, a utopia in which all are the same and nobody suffers for anything. George Orwell also wrote about a possible utopian society in his book *1984*. All the citizens were supposed to think alike and talk alike. They would

believe in a common history, which could be changed at the drop of a hat, but everyone would collectively agree with such a change without argument. Of course, we know the book talks about a dystopian society, a world in which people are afraid of what they say or think, or else they would be captured and killed, never thought of again.

{SLIDE 9} We open the Bible, and the word of God tells us that we cannot create a perfect society. We cannot make ourselves unlimited, un-sinful, by any means we may utilize. We just cannot do it. If anything, God's word shows us how we have messed everything up. All creation is in a mess because of our selfishness. All things suffer because we cause it all, including ourselves, to suffer.

But then, God's word provides for us an escape plan. God's word gives us the wisdom to see that there is a solution to the problem (although we do not find the solutions), there is a remedy to the illness (although we do not heal ourselves). Jesus Christ is the Solution. Christ is the Remedy. Christ heals us from sin, and we are made whole. Christ reveals the path to us, and there is no more confusion. Christ paid the price of our sin, and Christ brings all things together with his righteousness.

Try as we might, we will not get it all right, so that

is why we need a Savior to make it right for us. Despite our best efforts, we will always come short to the glory of God, but Christ fills in the gap; or rather, Christ carries us the rest of the way so we are in God's glory, celebrating with great joy.

God's word, and only God's word tells us that this is real. This is going to happen for us, who keep holding on to God and growing in our faith in Christ. It is not the right education, the right thinking, or the right government that removes our sin. We gain wisdom from the word of God, and the word of God tells us that Christ alone will make all things perfect, including ourselves, and we will be in perfection with God as one people under God.

{SLIDE 10} The psalmist in Psalm 119 cries out for wisdom. The psalmist wants holy instruction, just as we do. The psalmist wants to know more of God, just as we do. The psalmist turns to Scripture, and God is revealed. The psalmist's word become Scripture to us, and through these words God is revealed to us. God will make himself known to us in all of the Bible, and only in all of the Bible. No other resources will do.

We learn how to walk blamelessly with God. We learn how to do no wrong and not be put to shame. We learn how to remain steadfast in our faith, in our

relationship, with God. And we are given life. We are made alive forever.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear this good news from Psalm 16, “The Lord is our refuge, and so we have no good apart from him. The Lord gives us counsel, instructing our hearts even in the night. The Lord will not give us up to the Grave, but will always show us the path of life. In his presence there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Rejoice and believe the good news. You and I are forgiven through Christ our Savior, amen.