

Pastor Joe Polzin  
 Isaiah 55:8-13; 1 Corinthians 1:20-25  
 “O Come, Emmanuel – Come, O Wisdom”  
 Year B – Advent Midweek 1  
 December 2, 2020

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

In 2018, the Hubble telescope detected what is still the farthest star from earth that has ever been seen. It’s a blue giant nicknamed “Icarus,” named after the Greek mythological character who flew too close to the Sun on wings of feather and wax. This star is five billion light-years away, and it was only by a coincidental celestial phenomenon that temporarily boosted its light that we were able to see it. Now, a light-year is the distance that light travels in a year, which is incredibly fast and far, and this star is *five billion* light-years away. That’s not very close by, and even if you left today, you wouldn’t be getting there anytime soon.

But I was thinking about that today, this first midweek of Advent, as a prime example of just how high the heavens, the planets and stars and everything else God created, how truly high they are above the earth. And today we hear God declare through his prophet Isaiah, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. *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).

The thoughts of God, the ways of God, the reasons for his mighty acts are as far above our thoughts and plans as the star Icarus is above the ground on which we stand. In fact, God’s thoughts and ways are much farther above us—beyond all possible human understanding.

Yet, as far as his thoughts are above our thoughts, God in his infinite grace and mercy still chooses to come down to our level. That lofty, heavenly wisdom comes down from the heavens to the earth.

God says, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

When God speaks his mighty Word, things happen. At creation, God merely spoke the words, “Let there be light,” and light appeared. By his Word he placed the star that we call our Sun into the sky, as well as calling all the other stars into existence, including Icarus. As the Psalmist himself says, “[The Lord] determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names” (Psalm 147:4).

God’s Word is an active, busy thing; it always does exactly what God sends it to do. And when the time was right, he sent his Word to earth, the Word who was and is God, the Word who took on human flesh and dwelled among us. The Word born among us to be our Savior, whose birth we will celebrate on Christmas not too long from now.

But this is not a plan that we would have come up with ourselves. God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts and his ways higher than our ways. *We* might have tried to think of a more spectacular plan, but instead God chose his powerful Word to come among us as a helpless little infant who slept in a manger in Bethlehem.

The Word, the Wisdom of God, came to us in a way the world could not, and would not, recognize or understand. The mighty, creating Word came among us, not in power, but in weakness as a newborn baby who needed to be diapered and fed and rocked to sleep.

Of course, when the young Lord Jesus, the Word and Wisdom of God, grew to adulthood, he “increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). And he traveled among the people of God, and certainly taught wisely, with all the wisdom of God. As he himself said, his Word is the foundation on which to build our lives. To do otherwise is to be swept away in the troubles and storms of life.

But then the Wisdom of God did much more than teach. The mighty Word and Wisdom of God *chose to act* to win for us forgiveness and eternal life, achieving our salvation in the most unimaginable of ways.

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.” This was the purpose for which the Word was sent. God said of the Word he sends out, that it “shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

The helpless babe of Bethlehem, who grew into the adult who taught with such wisdom, allowed himself to be nailed up on a cross as a helpless victim. The Son of God took onto himself the penalty of death that we earned, that we deserve, for our sins. *That* was God’s plan to save us. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.”

The apostle Paul points out that, in the eyes of the world, God’s plan of salvation simply appears foolish and weak. The world cannot figure it out. A baby in a manger? Where is the power in that? The Son of God hanging helpless on a Roman cross? Where is the wisdom in that plan? Does that even work? How can the death of one man save the whole world from death?

Paul asks, “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe” (1 Corinthians 1:20-21).

We cannot know God through our vain attempts at chasing our own version of wisdom. We can only know God by the grace and mercy of God himself. His thoughts are not our thoughts, and his ways are not our ways. His plans are as far above our heads as the star Icarus, and farther than that still.

Yet God’s Word, God’s Wisdom, God’s own Son, came down to us. Those who are called to faith in the crucified Christ, called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, recognize the Savior for who he is: “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

In just a few weeks, we will be looking into the manger in Bethlehem. And what will you see? I’ll tell you what you’ll see. You will see a foolish idea, a weak and helpless infant. He won’t look wise or powerful, but he will be the one who called light into existence and who gave the stars their names. You will see “Emmanuel,” God with us. You will see Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Christ who is the Wisdom of God. Christ who came in his wisdom and his way to save you. In Jesus’ name. **Amen.**

And now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. **Amen.**