

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Where Is Wisdom?*"

Go ahead and open your Bibles to **Job 28**. This sermon is going to serve as a foundation for next Sunday's sermon.

A few weeks ago I told you I wanted to have a series on wisdom, but from a different perspective. I wanted to focus on the wisdom needed to navigate through trials.

Fittingly, the man in Scripture most associated w/ trials – Job – also has one of the most profound chapters in Scripture about wisdom.

My Moody Bible said, "*Job 28 is regarded rightly by many scholars as the theological and literary heart of the entire book.*"

Even though the first two chapters and the last few chapters get the most attention, maybe this chapter should receive the most attention!

Let me share a quote w/ you that came to mind as I studied this chapter...

On February 12, 2002, Donald Rumsfeld, who was serving as the US Secretary of Defense, said...

"There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know."

The statement became the subject of much commentary including a documentary film titled, "The Unknown Known," and Rumsfeld named his autobiography, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*.

Although Rumsfeld was speaking militarily when he made the statement, I think it works regarding trials b/c they fall into all three categories:

- We know God brings forth good from trials. This is a known known.
- We know we'll experience trials in the future, but we don't know what the trials will be. This is a known unknown.
- God is doing many unknown things through trials. John Piper said, "God is always doing 10,000 things in your life, and you may be aware of three of them." The 9,997 are unknown unknowns.

By the time we reach **Job 28**, Job and his friends have been debating his trials, but they don't think anything is unknown. To them it's all known knowns. They think they have it all figured out and it's as simple as Job is terribly suffering b/c he's a terrible sinner.

But to Job, he doesn't think he's been terrible, and he knows some righteous people suffer terribly, and some unrighteous people seem to lack suffering. To him it's a known unknown.

The actual truth is an unknown unknown to Job and his friends, b/c they didn't know about the exchange between God and the devil at the beginning of the book...

Job 1:8 and 2:3 The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?”

The truth was the opposite of what they were saying: Job was suffering b/c he was so righteous. He's like the tree that rose above all the others and ended up being struck by lightning as a result.

By the time we reach Job 28, Job has grown weary of the clichés and platitudes his friends have been giving him in the name of wisdom. He wanted real wisdom. Look at:

- **Job 28:12 “But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?”**
- **Job 28:20 “From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding?”**

This is the theme of the chapter: Where is wisdom?

First, we're going to look for it deep in the earth. Look at **verse 1**...

Job 28:1 “Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold that they refine. 2 Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from the ore. 3 Man puts an end to darkness and searches out to the farthest limit the ore in gloom and deep darkness.

Man digs into the darkest parts of the earth to mine silver, gold, iron, and copper...but he doesn't find wisdom.

Job 28:4 He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives; they are forgotten by travelers; they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro.

When it says **they hang in the air** and **swing to and fro**, it's describing man descending w/ ropes and swinging back and forth.

Man risks his life diggin deep **shafts** – or tunnels – where nobody lives or travels, and in **places** people have **forgotten** about...but he doesn't find wisdom.

Job 28:5 As for the earth, out of it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire.

Bread – which is really to say grain and wheat – **comes** up out of the earth, but when you go down into the earth there's **fire**, referring to molten rock and lava.

Job 28:6 Its stones are the place of sapphires, and it has dust of gold.

Man finds precious stones – such as **sapphires** – and **gold**...but still no wisdom.

Job 28:7 “That path no bird of prey knows, and the falcon's eye has not seen it.

Man searches out places no **bird** has ever flown or **seen**...but still no wisdom.

Job 28:8 The proud beasts have not trodden it; the lion has not passed over it.

Man searches out places the most powerful animals – such as the **lion** – haven't even gone.

Job 28:9 “Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by the roots. 10 He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing.

Man breaks open large rocks and overturns mountains in the sense of cutting tunnels into them. He finds every **precious thing** that could be under them...but still no wisdom.

Job 28:11 He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light. 12 “But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?

Man creates dams to stop rivers so he can search out riverbeds. If there's anything valuable hidden in the dark, he brings it to light.

He has looked, searched, and dug everywhere, but he doesn't find wisdom...and there are two reasons he doesn't.

One reason is in **verse 13**...

Job 28:13a Man does not know its worth,

This is a strong criticism...

Man doesn't find wisdom, b/c he's not looking for it, and he's not looking for it, b/c he doesn't how valuable it is. He'd rather find riches and gold, but...

Pro 3:15 [Wisdom] is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

Man will look everywhere for wealth w/o looking for wisdom...even though wisdom is more valuable.

This should cause us to ask how much we value wisdom...and this brings us to lesson 1...

LESSON 1: DO WE PURSUE WISDOM?

There's an interesting irony w/ the verses we read...

On the surface, they sound like they're commending man's ingenuity:

- He faces great danger to explore the earth and the sky
- He works hard to build tunnels and caves through rock and under mountains
- He brings light to the darkest and farthest places

But these verses are actually a criticism, and here's why...

Man won't put forth the same effort to gain wisdom...even though it's much more valuable than everything he's looking for.

This should cause us to ask if we value wisdom, and we can see how much we value wisdom, by how diligently we pursue it.

We're all pursuing something in that we're all investing our time and energy in something.

We pursue what we value. If we value wisdom we'll invest time and energy in gaining it.

I told you there were two reasons man can't find wisdom. The first reason is he doesn't value it, and the second reason is in the rest of **verse 13**...

Job 28:13b and it is not found in the land of the living.

There's no place in all the world that we can find wisdom...and this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: WISDOM IS HIDDEN.

If you look at the end of **verse 11** it says **the thing that is hidden he brings out to light.**

Man might bring many hidden things to light, but there's one hidden thing he can't bring to light and that's wisdom.

The above verses make the point that man can't find wisdom in creation

- Man can search everywhere
- He can dig out mines in the earth
- He can open shafts where nobody lives
- He can look high in the air where birds fly

But he can't find wisdom b/c it's hidden.

Multiple places in Scripture present wisdom as something hidden:

- **1 Cor 2:7** But we impart a secret and **HIDDEN WISDOM OF GOD**, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.
- **Matt 11:25** Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have **HIDDEN THESE THINGS** from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children. Jesus said the Father hid these things from the wise, which sounds odd b/c

since they're called wise it sounds like they have wisdom, but it means wise in their own eyes; it doesn't mean they have wisdom.

Consider the parables for a moment...

The word parable is related to our English word *parallel*, b/c...

- Jesus used real-life, familiar situations – such as a rebellious son, an annoying neighbor, and an unjust judge – to teach wisdom.
- He put earthly, physical stories alongside – or parallel to – heavenly, eternal realities to illustrate them.

What happened most of the time when Jesus taught parables?

- Did people say, “Wow, this makes so much sense. I’m amazed by what I just learned.”
- Or did they say, “This doesn’t make sense”?

They said it didn't make sense...b/c the wisdom was hidden.

Now here's the question...

- If Jesus wanted to teach about the kingdom of God...
- If He wanted people to gain wisdom...

Why did He speak in parables? Why didn't He just communicate plainly and straightforwardly?

The disciples asked this exact question...

Matt 13:10 Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?”

Jesus replied...

Matt 13:13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand...16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

The point of these verses is wisdom is hidden: God keeps it hidden from some, and He reveals it to others.

Before we read verses 14-19 I want you to look for the repeated use of the word **not** stressing the absence of wisdom in all of creation b/c it's hidden...

Job 28:14 The deep says, ‘It is not in me,’ and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’

The **deep** is the ocean, and you can't find wisdom there or in the **sea**.

Job 28:15 It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price.

Job mentioned gold five times, silver once, and he named seven precious stones...yet none of them can purchase wisdom.

For the last three weeks we discussed knowledge, and this is one of the major differences between wisdom and knowledge...

Knowledge is something you can purchase.

- People spend thousands of dollars on degrees, and online courses, and books to obtain knowledge
- People pay others to train them so they have the knowledge to do something

But there's no purchasing wisdom.

One reason you can't purchase it is you can't put a price on it. Look at **verse 16**...

Job 28:16 It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. 17 Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. 18 No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. 19 The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold.

The world thinks that anything can be obtained or fixed if only we have enough money:

- Government agencies ask for bigger slices of the annual budget so they can do a better job fighting crime, ending pollution, providing jobs, building a better environment, and caring for the homeless.
- People think if they get enough money they'll be able to buy what they want and finally be happy.

While a certain amount of money is needed to survive, money is not the do-all and be-all that the world thinks it is...and one reason it's not is no amount can obtain wisdom for us.

So it leaves us w/ the question in **verse 20**...

Job 28:20 "From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? 21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air.

Living people can't find wisdom, and it's even **concealed** from birds who fly high overhead and see everything.

Job 28:22 Abaddon and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'

You can't find wisdom in the land of the living, and you can't find it in the land of the dead.

Instead, here's where to find it...

Job 28:23 “God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.

Only God knows where to find wisdom...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: WISDOM BELONGS TO GOD.

Twice – in **verses 12 and 20** – Job asked, “Where is wisdom?” and He answered here: God has it.

We need to understand that wisdom is supernatural. It’s supernatural in that it belongs to God, and that’s why it can’t be found in the natural world.

Now Job gives evidence of God’s wisdom...

Job 28:24 For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.

God is omniscient, which means He sees and knows everything. He doesn’t have to dig into the earth or look up to the sky to see what’s there. He already knows.

Job 28:25 When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure,

God has the wisdom to adjust the pressure of the wind and measure the amount of water in the atmosphere. If these proportions were changed even a little, we’d experience terrible disturbances in our environment.

Job 28:26 when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, 27 then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out.

God commands the rain and guides the storm as it moves across the earth. Flashes of lightning and peals of thunder may seem arbitrary to us, but God controls all of them.

Consider these verses...

Rom 1:19 For what can be known about God is plain...20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.

God’s attributes are shown in the fabric of creation, and especially His wisdom b/c of the way everything is ordered so perfectly.

Now let me explain these verses in the context of the book of Job, b/c I think it’s very encouraging...

- As Job considered God’s sovereignty over the universe, it caused him to see God’s sovereignty over the events in his life.
- Even though everything looked chaotic to him at first, as he thought about the way God orders nature, he began to believe that God ordered everything he was experiencing.

- As He saw God behind all of creation, it allowed him to see God behind all his suffering. This is what led him to ask for an audience w/ God in the following chapters.

The wonderful, encouraging lesson for us is this...

- If God can control all of creation – in its vastness, complexity, and majesty – how much easier can He control our circumstances?
- If we can trust God to order all of nature so well, how much more can we trust Him to order our lives?

And b/c God is so wise and sovereign, there's only one reasonable conclusion, which Job states in **verse 28...**

Job 28:28 And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'"

Earlier Job said where to find wisdom – from God – and now he says what wisdom is: fearing God.

The Book of Job is part of what's known as the wisdom books, and fittingly they associate wisdom w/ the fear of God:

- **Ecc 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.**
- **Pro 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**
- **Psa 110:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**

The wisdom books are called the wisdom books b/c they teach the fear of God.

What does it mean to fear God?

It means having an attitude of reverence and awe toward Him b/c we respect His power and greatness.

Something interesting about this is God said Job feared Him...

Job 1:8 and 2:3 The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, WHO FEARS GOD and turns away from evil?"

Job has been looking for wisdom, but b/c he feared God, he had it since the beginning.

When you want to find wise people, look for people who fear God.

Let me close by showing you a couple verses in **Job 42.**

Take your minds back to the beginning of the sermon. Job's friends thought everything was a known known, which is to say:

- They knew why certain things were happening...
- They knew why God was doing what He was doing...
- They understood His purposes...

Twice Job asked: Where is wisdom?

We could say it's not w/ his friends.

When Job talked about nature and creation, it's like he said:

- *"You don't understand the natural – such as rain and thunder – how could you claim to understand the supernatural?"*
- *"You can't explain the physical and temporal, so how can you explain the spiritual and eternal?"*

They couldn't understand Job's suffering. It remained incomprehensible to them.

When they acted like they could understand, it wasn't wisdom. It was arrogance and presumption.

And that's why God was upset w/ them. Look at **verse 7**...

Job 42:7 After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for YOU HAVE NOT SPOKEN OF ME WHAT IS RIGHT, as my servant Job has. 8 Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For YOU HAVE NOT SPOKEN OF ME WHAT IS RIGHT, as my servant Job has."

God was angry w/ them. Twice He said that what they said wasn't right. Job had to pray for them, and offer a sacrifice on their behalf, and then God wouldn't punish them for their foolishness.

Here's the important point...

Many people think of wisdom the way Job's friends thought of wisdom, but their understanding of wisdom basically makes them false prophets.

What I mean is, they think it's wise, or a demonstration of wisdom to say:

- *"God did this for this reason..."*
- *"This is why this happened..."*
- *"This is why God is doing this..."*

But if we get an elevated view of everything we've read, here's what we see...

God is wise and:

- Only He knows why certain things happen
- Only He knows why He does certain things

They're known knowns to Him, but most of the time they're unknown unknowns to us.

So this begs the question...

What is wisdom if it's not knowing why God does what He does?

Wisdom is fearing God regardless of what's happening in our lives and even though we don't understand it.

Job was vindicated before his friends – and shown to be wise – not b/c he understood what God was doing, but b/c he continued to trust God even though he did NOT understand what God was doing.

Let me read Job's words one more time...

Job 28:28 The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.

Wisdom is knowing there are lots of unknown unknowns out there, but trusting and fearing God through all of them.

Let's pray.