

How did He remember our name? He has a photographic memory. Not true. Pastor Schulz has a list of 150 names in his pocket. If you approach church from a distance, he can quickly check his list, look up your name, and call you by your first name. But if you sneak up on him, and all of a sudden you stand in front of him, he just says "Hello, Welcome to Open Bible." Not as smart as I thought he was. Who do you consider as smart? Someone who has a photographic memory? Someone who has made over 10 million dollars? Jeff Bezos founded Amazon. What an amazing company. I can order something online and have it delivered to my door within a day or two. Boy is Jeff smart. Or what about Harold Schwartz and Gary Morse. They founded the Villages, Florida. It has grown from nothing to close to 150,000 residents. The Morse family back in 2015 had a net worth of 1.5 billion dollars. Harold, Gary and Mark Morse are super intelligent. But wait, we have a couple of small children in our congregation, Olivia, Sylvia, and David. Their wisdom far surpasses that of the Morse family or of Jeff Bezos. These kids are mature for their young ages. They have real wisdom. And so do you older people at Open Bible. It's amazing but "You are Smarter Than You Think".

Our society is not the only one that pines for wisdom. The ancient Greeks valued it as well. And yet when the Apostle Paul visited the church in the Greek city of Corinth he didn't put on a dazzling display of intellectual acumen. You heard Paul confess last week: "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words". But lest the Corinthians not take him seriously Paul went on to say in today's text: "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

Paul tells us that human wisdom will fail us. There are times when I have to depend on the wisdom of an auto mechanic to repair my car, or a dentist to fix my teeth or a doctor to prescribe the right medication when I get sick. In fact if I want to boil the perfect egg I may even turn to the internet and ask the question, "How can I boil a perfect egg?" This wisdom can help me get along better in life, but it cannot offer me help when it comes to knowing with absolute certainty how I can be saved and have an afterlife in heaven. Paul says there is a higher and better wisdom. It is a secret wisdom among the mature that the rulers and wise people of this age don't know about. "The Professors at Harvard. The Senators and Members of the House of Representatives. President Donald Trump. Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Pontius Pilate, Herod, the Jewish Sanhedrin. They are all in the dark about this secret wisdom.

However, Paul is mature. He has something to share that is not fake news. His article could be titled: God's Secret's Revealed." Paul really does have a secret wisdom from God revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Paul explained: "God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God...

No one besides God, not even your spouse or a sibling, knows what you're thinking right now. You would have to enlighten us. In the same way, there is no way for us to know what God is thinking unless he tells us. Thankfully he does that through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit hasn't spoken directly to us but he did somehow communicate with people like the Apostle Paul who then wrote those words down in what we today call the Bible. Do you want to gain real wisdom? Real wisdom comes from the Spirit. And the Spirit speaks to us through the pages of

the Bible. When we come together to hear and study the Bible we're not just examining an ancient text; we're reading God's mind! Imagine if you could read the mind of a successful investor like Warren Buffett. What would that mean for you? Wouldn't it mean that you too could make smart investing choices and earn lots of money? Well we have something even better in the Bible. Reading and studying it leads to an eternally secure future.

That secure future comes to us only by believing the Bible's main message. What is the main message of the Bible? A number of years ago someone published a cookbook based on healthy recipes from the Bible. Bible recipes? I think you've read the Bible enough to know that it's not a cookbook. Nor does the Bible teach you how to build a successful business. Yes, it does explain what makes for happy homes but even that isn't the main purpose of the Bible. Real wisdom, Paul explains, concentrates on Christ. Paul told the Corinthians, "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Ah, but we know this, Pastor. If you don't urge us every Sunday to concentrate on Christ, the Lutheran worship service certainly does with its Christ-centered hymns and liturgy. Can't we focus on something else?" Let me ask you this: when you envisioned our church expansion what did you see? A big fellowship hall with windows bringing in the sunshine? An expanded kitchen with commercial refrigerator. Three classrooms for choir, kids and small group meetings? Did anyone dream of the building's foundation? I doubt it. And yet if we don't get the foundation right, the rest of the building is doomed. Likewise Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith. Therefore real wisdom concentrates on Christ because without a proper understanding of who Jesus is and what he has done for us, we're building on sand instead of solid rock.

And we need constant encouragement to concentrate on Christ because we're like Jesus' first disciples. It takes only minutes for us to become drowsy, spiritually cool, careless. We forget how extraordinary it is that God has miraculously invaded our world to speak to us and so we don't honor the Word with our full attention when it is spoken. Instead we pay closer attention to our Facebook feeds and phone texts. But that's like failing to keep your eyes on the road while trying to navigate rush hour traffic. Sure, it's "boring" keeping your eyes on the road when there are so many other things to look at, but if you don't concentrate on the road, you won't make it safely to your destination. Likewise if we don't continue to concentrate on Christ and what he has done for us, we won't make it safely to heaven.

But concentrating on Christ when all your friends talk about is a Caribbean cruise or the Baby Boomer Dance on Valentine's Day is not easy. Nor is it an easy feat to concentrate on Christ by giving a respectable portion of your income to him when our friends have upgraded to a new home or want you to go on a European vacation. But there's wisdom in what you're doing. Concentrating on Christ will culminate in glory. Listen again to the Apostle Paul. "...we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began" (1 Corinthians 2:7).

Did you hear that? Real wisdom is ancient. It's been around since before clocks started ticking on earth. No one was around when God created the world in which we live. It was a secret. But then in his love for us God reveals exactly how our world was made, and how he created us. He tells how sin came into the world through Adam and Eve. That allows us to understand why people are as mean and nasty as they are, and why we have prisons with nasty prisoners, and kids hit each other and bully each other, and moms and dads fight, and why we

have bad thoughts in our hearts that someone once said would shame hell itself.

In this amazing book we call the Holy Bible, God comes to us and he whispers in our ear and says, "Let me tell you a secret. Let me tell you how I have a plan to rescue you and save you from the sin that is going to cause you to spend an eternity in hell. I am going to send my Son into the world. He is going to become like you except without sin. He is going to die on the cross and suffer for everything you have done wrong so you can be forgiven. His blood will wash away every sin you ever committed." His plan is not one we would have dreamed up. We would have sent in the angels to kick some Satan. But God came himself – not that many realized it because he hid his majesty in diapers, and then years later put his love on full display with a crucified carpenter. No, very few saw divine wisdom in that.

God still hides his glorious wisdom. He meets us in the message of law that points out our sins, and in the gospel that declares how Christ paid for those sins. This message is proclaimed on the pages of a book and through the words of a feeble preacher. It's hidden in a handful of water, and in pennies' worth of bread and wine. The world doesn't see wisdom there. But by the Holy Spirit's gracious working you do. Believing what God has to say about our sin and what Jesus has done for us to take those sins away will lead to glory in heaven that will far outshine and outlast the thrill of a Key West Vacation. Don't despise this wisdom.

Real wisdom isn't knowing how many beats an eighth note gets in 6/8 time, or remembering the names of America's first four Presidents. Real wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit, it concentrates on Christ, and it culminates in glory. Marvel and rejoice at how God has again given you this wisdom. You are mature. You are truly Smarter Than You Think! Amen.