

READING

Proverbs 3:13-35

SERMON

Winning the Jackpot of Wisdom! (Proverbs 3:13-35)**Two British tickets win £90m Euro lotto****THE £90million EuroMillions jackpot was split by two BRIT tickets last night.****They get a whopping £45million - each smashing the UK record for a Lotto payout.****A National Lottery spokesman said: "This is fantastic news. These two ticketholders have just banked the largest lottery prizes ever paid out in the country."****Previous biggest British Lottery winner was ex-Royal Mail worker Angela Kelly - who scooped £35.4million in August 2007.****The single mum, 40, from East Kilbride, was skint until she beat odds of 76million to one.****It was not known last night if either of the winning tickets was bought by an individual or a syndicate.****If a single person held either ticket they would launch themselves into joint 1,203rd place on the Sunday Times Rich List - beating Michael Owen whose £40m places him at 1,348th, and Wayne and Coleen Rooney who are at 1,550 with a fortune of £35m.****The Lotto spokesman added: "If either belong to a single winner they will soar into the top spot on the National Lottery rich list - trumping Angela.****"We have plenty of champagne on ice."**

Just in case you want to know

The winning numbers were: 11, 19, 34, 43, 45 - with Lucky Stars 5 and 9.

I should be gutted at this news because the other week I was rung up and asked, "Have you ever played the National Lottery?" I answered that I never had, but the lady on the other end of the phone then went into her pitch about Euro lotto and how great it was and that you have more chance of winning than in the National Lottery, so did I want to buy a ticket? I then answered by saying that we began this conversation by me saying that I had never brought a National Lottery ticket so why would I then buy a Euro Lotto ticket and before I could continue, the phone went dead.

But now I have missed out on the 76 million to one odds of winning over £40 million! But the writer of Proverbs says in 3:13

“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.”

(Proverbs 3:13-15 NIV)

Wisdom is more profitable than silver and gives a better return than gold! What a great commodity. The rubies here mentioned could be red coral, but it is precious and so rubies are the nearest equivalent for us. But just to be sure - **nothing you desire can compare with her.**” (Proverbs 3:15 NIV). Nothing is better than wisdom, nothing that we desire because it is from God.

Why is Wisdom so great? Well it has certain benefits.

Pleasant and Peaceful

“Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.” (Proverbs 3:17 NIV)

With wisdom one gains peace which other means cannot always give. We saw with fame the effects it had on Susan Boyle where a recent article in the Mail Online said

Within a few short days, she became a global internet sensation, but then the pressure seemed to prove too much for her. Susan checked herself into the Priory clinic in north London, sparking a media furore about reality TV 'exploitation' and claims of a life wrecked by transient fame.

With money, that is no guarantee of peace, but with wisdom – you will have peace and why? Verse 21

“My child, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight;” (Proverbs 3:21 NIV)

Because with wisdom you get sound judgement and discernment – what could be better! They were talking this week about people who had won huge amounts on the lottery and then brought this and purchased that and then realised that they had no money. Or the person had given up their job and they been told that the money they won will not give them a living wage for the rest of their lives.

Wisdom brings peace because we make sound judgements. But there is more to wisdom, verse 32 God’s Confidence and Grace

“for the LORD detests a perverse person but takes the upright into his confidence. The LORD’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble.”

(Proverbs 3:32-34 NIV)

Just think about that. The Perverse is detested, and this is not necessarily wicked people, but those who have rejected God, think Jesus did not exist or is irrelevant in their lives. But for saints – that is sinners who have repented and realise that they need Jesus in their lives God is so intimate that we are in his confidence. Think about that for a moment – you are in the confidence of the creator of the universe.

This week

A Powys butcher has rewritten the rules of etiquette by accepting an honour from the queen with a ballpoint pen behind his ear.

William Lloyd Williams was collecting an MBE for services to the meat industry and checked with the palace if it was acceptable to wear the unusual accessory to the ceremony.

The butcher always keeps a pen behind his ear so he can take orders from customers.

And why? – just in case the Queen wanted to order a turkey! No-one else has ever dreamed of doing that with such an important figure – but that is the relationship we have with God, the Almighty. He has let us into the plans for the end of time – he has shown us how to live now, he has made us privy to the reasons why Jesus, God the Son came to earth – we are in his confidence, he shares things with us. We can be in the presence of God with a pen stuck behind our ear!

And all this is because of the grace of God, but we need to be humble. But wisdom come to those who are humble as the

“The fear of the LORD teaches a person wisdom, and humility comes before honour.” (Proverbs 15:33 NIV)

We become humble when we know that we cannot save ourselves, but sadly after we come to that position we can then stop being humble because we know that God is the source of salvation and will not let us go, but forget that we have a lot more wisdom to learn.

God is tremendously gracious to us. Jesus coming was just so wonderful. God could have scrapped earth after Adam and Eve sinned, and began all over again. He then could have destroyed all in the flood, but he didn't but in all that time he was waiting for eh right moment to come to earth and to die on the cross, a most painful and hideous death – because of his grace to us. Wow! Do we say that enough in relation to what God has done, in relation to his grace towards us – Wow!

So with wisdom we have the jackpot of Pleasant and Peaceful lives, and of God's Confidence and Grace, but the jackpot of Wisdom is more than this we are told. Verse 16

“Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour.”
(Proverbs 3:16 NIV)

Long Life, Riches and Honour

Tomorrow we have the funeral of Renford Bonner here at church. Last week there was the funeral of Ernest Small, both men were not that old, although they had both passed their 'three score years and ten'. We call know of Christians who are good Christians, wise Christians who are not rich and may have problem with honour in their own country. When an employee can be sacked for wearing a Christian symbol at work – there was no honour given there.

But we have to remember that these are proverbs, not promises. If you think about the Proverbs we have they are so often contradictory:

**Look before you leap.
Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
Seek and ye shall find.
Save for a rainy day.
Too many cooks spoil the broth.
Great minds run in the same channel.**

**He who hesitates is lost.
Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.
Curiosity killed the cat.
Tomorrow will take care of itself.
Many hands make light work.
Fools think alike.**

So with the Proverbs here – they are what we know usually happens, but it is not cast in stone. Long life and riches are not guaranteed, but they are what normally follows when we win the jackpot of wisdom which is **more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold, more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.** (Proverbs 3:13-14 NIV).

And this wisdom only comes from God, not from us and it has to be pursued – it has to be found. This is why it is precious – it is of God. It is God because as verse 19 tells us

“By wisdom the LORD laid the earth’s foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.” (Proverbs 3:19-20 NIV)

And we are told in Genesis 1

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” (Genesis 1:1-2 NIV)

And then in John’s gospel

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” (John 1:1-3 NIV)

In those verses we have God the Father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit, God creating the earth, but then in Proverbs we have wisdom also involved. A fourth member of the Trinity or what? No it is God, so gaining wisdom is going deeper with God.

However along with the jackpot of wisdom, the searching for wisdom, the fact that wisdom is going deeper with God, we also have an obligation with this wisdom. Verse 27

“Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbour, "Come back later; I’ll give it tomorrow"—when you now have it with you. Do not plot harm against your neighbour, who lives trustfully near you. Do not accuse a person for no reason—when that person has done you no harm.” (Proverbs 3:27-30 NIV)

Do not withhold good from others. If you have wisdom, give it away. Could we be said to be plotting against our neighbours if we withhold the greatest gift from them? Could we be said to be accusing that person if we feel that they do not deserve to know about the gospel?

We are entrusted with wisdom, to keep, but to also give away to others. This is our obligation, this is what we are to do. Someone has likened it in a circular way as we receive → we then give → we then receive → then we give as so on a so forth.

This jackpot of wisdom should have two things which the Euro Lotto winners may say they will not say

- “It will not change my life” – wisdom is to change our lives – it cannot do anything else
- “I am going to keep all of this” – wisdom is to give away, not keep for it is the best thing in the world – salvation and eternal life.

What are we like at giving wisdom away?