



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, July 26, 2020

Knowing Right and Doing It

by Garland F. Pierce

Genesis 29:15-28

1 Kings 3:5-12

When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?"

Genesis 29:25

"Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

1 Kings 3:9

Those who know better do better, goes the old adage. The reality is knowing better, knowing right can lead to doing better and doing right but knowing is not an automatic guarantee. Many of our church schools across the connection have been studying about wisdom for the last several weeks. Wisdom is the embodiment of knowledge that informs and fuels right behavior. The news cycles of the last few years in particular would have us ask why is wisdom calling in the streets yet ignored. There are far too many instances of people knowing better yet ignoring wisdom and right, willfully choosing to do the opposite, disregarding the well-being of others and even exploiting the vulnerable.

Jacob, at times in his life, seemed to be in the latter category, to the point that he is known as a trickster. Having exploited his brother and tricked his aging father, he finds himself in the land of his mother's people. The text tells us that Jacob, the trickster, gets tricked by his uncle Laban. It appears that Laban knew the customs of his people as well as his intention to see that his elder daughter was married before his younger. Jacob, a relative yet a foreigner of sorts, for whatever reason didn't know this custom nor anticipate Laban's intention. A father and an elder, Laban used the knowledge and influence that he had to gain extra years of labor from Jacob. Jacob's predicament mirrors the predicament of so many workers, even some deemed "essential" during this pandemic, who find themselves in work situations that exploit them, enticed by promises that are not kept. We can often identify with Jacob's exploited reality; but, when have we been Laban,

using situations to our advantage at the expense of someone else's livelihood, well-being, deferred dreams, and future? Godly wisdom calls us to be and to do better.

After his father's death and at the beginning of his own solo reign, King Solomon offers a prayer that pleads for Godly wisdom to undergird his leadership. He is praised for his wisdom as a leader. Yet we also know from scripture that he was not perfect; he made mistakes as well as reigned with an extravagance that came at the cost of the suffering of some of the most vulnerable in his kingdom. God was pleased with Solomon's initial request for wisdom to lead. The function of government is to protect the common good and to provide justice for all. Concern for preserving power and privilege is a distraction from the true purpose of leadership.

In these days, we have celebrated the lives and mourned the passing of some of the veteran USA Civil Rights Movement leaders, particularly Rev. C.T. Vivian and US Representative John Lewis. Both were blessed with wisdom, long, fruitful lives, and lasting legacies. In an era with numerous examples of selfish and ill-informed leaders, these two justice-seeking leaders shine as sterling examples of those who discerned right from wrong and were called to fight and pursue the right, peacefully yet powerfully. Knowing what ought to be is critical; yet, doing and working for what must be is the faithful response to the call of true discipleship.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—How will you open yourself up to Godly wisdom and do what is right? What will your next faithful step be?

PRAY:

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly, grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties the grace to ask what You would have us to do; that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in Your light we may see light, and in Your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

AMEC Hymnal, #777

ACT:

1. Based on your answers regarding Godly wisdom and right action, come up with a plan and start taking your next faithful steps. For those US citizens, participate in the current democratic processes (voter registration, voting, completing the 2020 census and encouraging others to do so—See: <http://www.amev-alert.org> and <https://2020census.gov>.) For everyone, practice social distancing as much as possible, wash your hands often, and wear face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amehealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me
AMEC Hymnal, #358

1. I'm gon-na live so God can use me an-y-where, Lord, an-y-time!
I'm gon-na live so God can use me an-y-where, Lord, an-y-time!

