

Job 28; Hebrews 11: 17 – 31

**'Wisdom and Job'**

**Introduction ...**

When, I wonder, was the last time you saw a 'trailer' about a TV programme or series ... and it actually made a difference ... as a consequence of the trailer, you did watch the whole thing???

I ask because our New Testament reading is – in a sense – a trailer for next week. All of **Chapter 11 of Hebrews** is giving examples of 'Faith in Action.'

Why? Well partly as an explanation of what Faith is – in verse 1 of Chapter 11: ***'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen ...'***

But also – these examples of faithful lives are given to inspire and encourage us ... Chapter 12 (which we'll hear next week) begins: ***'Therefore ...'*** ... therefore ... because of all these examples ... ***'Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses ... let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us ...'*** and there's more ... but that's for next week!

**Interpreting Job ...**

For now, let's turn back to our first reading – to **Job 28**.

When we looked back a few weeks – 11<sup>th</sup> July – it was clear that we have to be very careful interpreting this Biblical book. We need to realise who is speaking and whether or not God is said to approve of their words ... it's not necessarily straight forward.

In tonight's passage, the words are attributed to Job ... and are in the second half of the book ... but still before Job and God 'sort things out' between them.

Most of the words are about the impossibility of the quest for wisdom ... and in that sense, despite the rich imagery and beautiful poetry – the message is negative:

**Verses 12, 13: *'But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Mortals do not know the way to it and it is not found in the land of the living.'***

So what are we to make of the words at the end of **Job 28** – perhaps the most well-known phrases in the book: Job saying that God says to humankind: ***'Truly the fear of the Lord – that is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding.'***

Well, it is certainly in line with phrases we find elsewhere in the Old Testament in terms of the ***'fear of the Lord'*** being associated with ***'wisdom'*** **Proverbs 9:10 and Psalm 111: 10 ...**

But it's really important to note that in each of these 3 cases, the same Hebraic word is used ... and it's associated with "awe and reverence" rather than "terror." It's not in conflict with all the other hundreds of Bible verses which say: ***'Fear not'*** or ***'do not be afraid'***.

It's a reminder to realise our limitations – that we don't know everything, our understanding is partial, which links to St Paul's teaching in **1 Corinthians** – and don't always automatically choose the optimal use of our knowledge and **PTO**

understanding – including that which arises from our faith.

### **What is wisdom / why do we need it?**

I'll give an obvious illustration:

Part of Christian love is to give generously to those in need ...

So: do we give to:

Tear fund

The Food Bank

Send a cow

The Children's Society

Christian Aid

Someone struggling in our own family

Water Aid

Open Doors ... and I could go on and on ...

Wisdom is about being able to judge correctly and follow God's guiding.

Another example:

I have some time free on a Tuesday morning:

Do I volunteer for the Foodbank

Do I see if I could help with reading in school

Do I commit to seeing those of my neighbours who are struggling on a more regular basis?

This requires wisdom and – wisdom actually beyond our own ...

And we have major advantages over Job ... **we** know Jesus – described by St Paul in **1 Corinthians 1: 18** '**Christ: the power and the wisdom of God**' and that same Jesus Christ gives us His Holy Spirit to '**guide us into all truth**' as we read in John.

### **Conclusion ...**

But – you might be thinking – that's the 'theory' ... how does all of this work ... become real ... in everyday life?

Well – this is where we come full circle to where I began ... the trailer for next week found in the cliff-hanger at the end of **Hebrews 11!**

Next week we'll move onto **Chapter 12: 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us ... looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our Faith.'** Next Sunday evening, we'll consider ways of looking to Jesus as we seek his wisdom. Amen.