

## Wisdom's High Reward

† priceless riches (vv.8-9)

† lifelong knowledge (vv.10-12)

In the Name of Jesus, God's Wisdom from above, dear family of God:

One of my most vivid childhood memories is family devotions. It worked best for us to get out our Bibles and hymnals at breakfast before heading off to school. As soon as we could read, Dad had a Bible in our hands and expected us to follow along. None of us got to attend a Lutheran school until we four boys could travel 1500 miles to the closest WELS high school at the time in South Dakota. I'm convinced, and statistics bear this out, that nothing can replace a clear focus on God's Word at home. Even attending our Lutheran schools, if parents don't talk about faith matters at home, kids can easily lose the Christian faith. **Wisdom's High Reward** is found by those who cash in on the treasure of God's Holy Book, the Bible, especially its concentration in one particular book of...

† priceless riches (vv.8-9)

This book has thirty-one chapters. You can easily read it in a normal month, just one chapter a day. Lately it's more memorable for me to listen to someone else reading God's Word. It helps that readings of the Holy Scriptures are free on the Internet. If your phone is "smart" enough, you can even download these Scripture readings for when no Internet is available, like at the lake up north or wilderness areas. I love to hear God's Word in God's creation, so uplifting among God's **priceless riches**.

Today the Holy Spirit has us counting the cost of discipleship in our Scripture lessons (Proverbs 9:8-12; Philemon 1:1,10-21; Luke 14:25-33). There is a price. You can't have **Wisdom's High Reward** unless you follow God's highest revelation of **Wisdom** in the person of His own Son Jesus Christ. It's real hatred when Jesus says, "***If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.***" (Luke 14:26f NIV84) Compared to our love for God who loved us first, all other relationships ultimately amount to hatred. You may scratch your head at this if you're blessed with God-fearing family at home. But if you're put to the test by family members who have no use for God's Word, then Jesus' word "***hate***" begins to make sense. It's what Samson experienced when his unbelieving Philistine ***wife threw herself on him, sobbing, "You hate me! You don't really love me. You've given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer."*** (Judges 14:16 NIV84) Our family devotions revealed the rest of that story in the book of Judges. But every disciple of Jesus living with nonbelieving, worldly relatives experiences the proof of Jesus' wisdom: "***If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own....I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.***" (John 15:18f NIV84) Faith loves God; unbelief hates God and His followers. Jesus says the feeling is mutual.

God's Son also says, "***Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.***" (Matthew 5:44) – love-hate relationship God's family appreciates in **priceless riches** – what to imitate and what to avoid.

***"Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you."*** One casualty of our entertainment culture is that everyone thinks he's a comedian. Professional comics can fall into the ***mock***-trap. If they're running out of material, some get gross and disgusting. Shock humor is cheap and people laugh, but notice how comedians who last more than a season are actually funny, not just gross?

We saw a "***mock***" the other night at a financial seminar. The speaker asked him to leave. On his way out the man looked at nearly sixty of us and said, "If you really want to get rich, I'll tell you how

to grow tomatoes.” In his fog he thought he was funny or wise, but surprise! Alcohol was involved. And no one was sad when his wife and son got up and followed him out. No love lost with a “*mock*er.”

On the flip side of **Wisdom’s High Reward** are **priceless riches**. “*Rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.*” Maybe you too are embarrassed remembering someone trying to tell you something, but you were too stubborn to listen. In another place the Lord’s holy writer, King Solomon, says, “*If you have been foolish by exalting yourself..., put your hand over your mouth.*” (30:32 HCSB) Stop and listen to wise advice. Then you can look back and love the person who cared enough not to give up on you, who maybe saved you from serious loss. Don’t be wise in your own eyes. Let faithful instruction add more wisdom and learning. God is so rich in blessing you don’t have to pay high tuition in His school of grace. Sacrifice your pride at the foot of the cross and **priceless riches** will flow like a river of...

### ✠ **lifelong knowledge (vv.10-12)**

“*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*” Once a highly intelligent university student asked in all seriousness whether his great learning would follow him to heaven. He was shopping for religion. If I told him what he wanted, he’d become a Christian. If not, something else. But without true “*fear of the LORD*” you can’t begin to have lasting **knowledge**. This “*fear of the LORD*” is not like Adam and Eve hiding from God in the garden, feeling guilty from their sin of rebellion. That’s slavlike fear. Rightly it’s been said, “Slavlike fear is afraid God will come; childlike fear is afraid He will go away.”<sup>1</sup> **Lifelong knowledge** sees God is good.

So the Holy Spirit taught us to pray: “O give thanks to the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endures* forever.” (Psalm 136:1) Sometimes we struggle to be thankful *for*, but miss being thankful *to* God. God’s goodness worked a way to remove all our sins. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross lifted off the crushing burden of our guilt. Now we’re so grateful to say with David: “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered...I acknowledged my sin to you, and my iniquity I have not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD; and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*” (Psalm 32:1,5)

To understand our last verses, think of rock stars and movie magnets who died young from foolish living. Jesus speaks as **Wisdom** with another **High Reward** of **lifelong knowledge**: “*Through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.*” A “*mock*er” is so full of himself he keeps complaining no one ever listens; he just doesn’t realize he’s doing all the talking. **Lifelong learning** of **Wisdom’s High Reward** gives discernment to pick and choose according to God’s Word. Children don’t have to copy the mistakes of their parents, but wisdom knows there’s no escape without listening. Teenage Jesus went home and submitted to His parents even after their unfair scolding in the temple. Only if someone tries to turn us away from God’s Word, then wise children have to let parents go their own way. You and your family need not follow into ruin. Follow Christ to **knowledge** of an eternal lifetime Christ guarantees it.

Wish I had more time for the Holy Spirit’s original Hebrew words. בִּינְיָן (*bînâ*) **understanding** for the builders; דַּעַת (*da‘at*) **knowledge**, or *data* for the engineers, doctors and lawyers; חֵכְמָה (*hokmâ*) **wisdom** for everyone to put it all together. Luther: “If we try to preach everything, we get nothing.”

So remember Pastor Loren Steele’s story about the world renowned geophysicist with published papers in a showcase outside her office in Beijing. Loren said he could read one or two sentences and already be lost. Once he was explaining the foolishness of evolution, and she politely stopped him. “Pastor Steele, you can’t teach me anything about science. Just teach me about Jesus.” Yes! Jesus, with **priceless riches** and **lifelong learning**. Jesus gives Himself fully and completely in Word and sacrament – **Wisdom’s High Reward**. Jesus is all you need for time and eternity. By faith He’s yours. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> **NET-Pr.** *Proverbs—New Evangelical Translation.* © 1991 NETNT Pub. Study 3, THE “FEAR” OF THE LORD, p. 77-79.  
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