

Wisdom

1 Kings 3:3-14
Ephesians 5:15-20

August 19, 2018
Faith Community

In its twenty third year of existence, the Woodward Dream Cruise has become an institution in its own right.

What began as a small fundraiser for a soccer field in Ferndale is now the biggest one day automotive event in the world. On the third Saturday in August a million and a half people show up to watch 40,000 cars strut their stuff along a sixteen mile long stretch of the Woodward corridor covering nine cities and generating at least \$55,000,000 in revenue.

Woodward Avenue itself has been called the “Boulevard of Dreams.” A car was driven on it for the first time in 1896, and on August 4, 1924, it became the first paved road in the world.

If you want to drive in the Dream Cruise, you need to have a classic car. The definition of a classic car is pretty loose. It must meet one or more of the following requirements:

- It creates a feeling of nostalgia.
- It stimulates a memory.
- It fulfills a fantasy.

There being no formal application process, I guess it's up to each person to decide if the criteria is met. That being the case, I drove a classic vehicle for seven and a half years, since at least for me it satisfied those conditions quite nicely.

It was a little red 1996 Geo Metro, and what it lacked in size, it more than made up for in heart and class. Its air conditioning followed the classic pattern of cranking open the window on a hot day and getting all the air you could ask for. It had a three-cylinder engine which I didn't know even existed at the time, and a five speed manual transmission, which meant that I could go from zero to sixty in ten minutes, even less if I was headed downhill.

Its diminutive size was what led to its undeserved and highly prejudicial reputation. This reached its climax when a certain young lady whom I'd help raise from birth repaid my unending kindness by naming it the “Death Car.” She called it that because of her feeling that it and its occupants would not survive anything more than a five mile per hour impact

with anything more substantial than a pigeon. Actually, the two youngest residents of 343 Cobblestone Court had nothing to do with it over the years, and the adult female occupant there kept her distance as much as possible. Philistines, every one of them.

There's an expression that goes, "revenge is sweet," not that I'd know it from experience, of course, but my heart was strangely warmed every time I pulled up to a gas pump, which may have happened a dozen times or so over the course of its life. The Death Car regularly turned in a performance of between forty and fifty miles per gallon of gas. I think there were two occasions when the tab came close to \$12.00 for a fill up, and that was when the needle was below empty and I was running on fumes, and gas was going for almost \$2.00 a gallon.

All that is a thing of the distant past, however. There will be no Dream Cruise for the Death Car, since he went to that great garage in the sky. Traded in, he was, much to my chagrin. Pressure from the family finally prevailed, and after all those years of heartless and unjust criticism, I got a Chevy Cavalier. First time I got gas it cost \$17.00, so I felt appropriately vindicated for all that ridicule. It was a fun little thing, though, and even had one more cylinder than the Death Car, and we got along fine, thank you very much.

I narrowed names for it down to two possibilities. Behind door number one was Death, Junior. I didn't care for the abbreviation, though, thinking it wouldn't be cool to ride around in something called D.J. The winner, you'll be glad to know, was D2, which is short for Death the Second.

Now what does all this have to do with today's topic of wisdom, you might be wondering. Well, on one hand we have this gigantic festival filled with nostalgia and partying, and on the other happening at about the same time fifteen years ago was a three-day loss of power that hit the east coast and upper Midwest that we responded to with panic buying and gas lines the likes of which we hadn't seen since the 1970s. What do we need to learn from this?

The book of Ephesians says,

Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. (5:15)

This is why we need to watch King Solomon. He's still new on the job, and as if things weren't already going well, gets a genie in a lamp thing going for him. God appears in a dream and says, "Name it and claim it. Say it and you've got it." What would you do?

I say that because with all that glittered before him, Solomon makes a wonderfully counterintuitive choice:

I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties....So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours? (1 Kings 3:7, 9 NIV)

Solomon knows he doesn't have what it takes for the job. He's out of his league. But instead of bluffing or pretending, he does the right thing. Watch this. Pay attention.

The very first definition of wisdom in my Encarta Dictionary says it's "the ability to make sensible decisions and judgments based on personal knowledge and experience."

Friends, we live in a culture of anxiety, anger and fear. And it will always be that way as long as we look no further than ourselves and our supply of daily essentials for a sense of well being.

Instead, listen to Solomon. Listen to the apostle Paul. Watch Jesus.

He was never a passive or powerless victim of events. When he faced challenges, he rose up to meet them, with the skill and confidence and energy that were more than sufficient.¹

In the same way, I want you to be able to live with God honoring conviction as opposed to those who live on easy answers and catchphrases.

This comes only from time spent in silence, in community, and in outreach.

Silence spent in reading, listening, watching, and paying attention.

¹ Homiletics.com, 3-19-03.

Community made up of Christ followers who love you enough to hold your feet to the fires of growth and accountability so that you become more like Christ in your character and in your emotional and spiritual maturity.

Outreach that causes you to stretch and makes a transforming impact on the world.

A man named John Bonham died at the Alamo along with Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and the others. Today there's a picture gallery there of those who died, but there's no picture of John Bonham. That's because none was ever made.

Rather than let him be forgotten, they put up a picture of his nephew. On the plaque it reads, 'No portrait of John Bonham exists, so in its place is one of his nephews who greatly resembled him. It's here so that people will never forget the face of this one who died for freedom.'²

Friends, no one really knows what Jesus looked like when he walked the earth. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, when people think of him, you would come to mind? And they just might say, "You remind me of someone," and in that way will never forget what it means to be a hopeful person, regardless of whatever else may be going on.

The next time you see a gas line or hear of the latest political scandal or controversy, even a terror alert, understand what it means to be wise, and let it drive you to Jesus.

² Preaching, January-February, 2003, p. 73.