

06 November 2022—All Saints Sunday: Ephesians 1:11-23

Paul offers a prayer for the new Christians in the city of Ephesus: *I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.*

Paul asks God to give them: *a spirit of wisdom and revelation*. It has been said, “knowledge is power,” but that is not so. The appropriate, beneficent application of knowledge is power. Wisdom, not mere knowledge, is essential. From a Christian perspective wisdom comes through revelation. The traditional Christian understanding is that all truth is from God; truth may be revealed through recognizable means—in the Scriptures, the Creeds, the Church’s Tradition, but may also be revealed in the laboratory, through the scholar’s musings, the poet’s verse, the worker’s insight, the inventor’s innovation. All truth is from God, and since God cannot contradict himself, God’s truth cannot be contradictory. We receive the Truth God yearns to give us; our part is receptivity and action. We are to be inquisitive, self-aware, teachable, and ready to live the Truth of God’s self-revelation, the truth of the world, the truth of ourselves. As we receive and live *a spirit of wisdom and revelation* specific results follow.

First, *...the eyes of your heart (are) enlightened...* “...heart in the Jewish-Christian tradition refers to the source of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional, and moral energies,” wrote Henri Nouwen in his book, *The Way of the Heart*. As we receive God’s wisdom and revelation, the core of our lives is changed and ‘enlightened,’ that is, exposed and brought into the light of God’s wisdom and revelation. Therefore, we cannot examine God’s wisdom and revelation as an object. We must enter in to know. Is this not how all of life works? We only truly know by experiencing that which we seek to know. Until we enter the reality of the thing itself, it is all just theory and hearsay. We receive God’s wisdom and revelation and are thereby enlightened, changed, prepared to receive yet more of God’s wisdom and revelation.

God’s wisdom and revelation includes knowing *what is the hope to which he has called you*. From our Prayer Book Catechism: “The Christian hope is to live with confidence in newness and fullness of life, and to await the coming of Christ in glory, and the completion of God’s purpose for the world” (pg. 861). As we receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation, we confidently anticipate God’s promises coming true in us and in the world—even if outward appearances indicate otherwise; Christians are not blind to nor immune from the world’s evil or our own. Rather, we trust in One greater than the events of the moment, greater than the wounds we suffer and inflict. Our hope is not a Pollyanna fantasy, but the assurance that in God all will be made right beyond our imaginings.

We will also receive *the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints*. This refers to the Church. By ‘Church’ we mean the earthly always-in-need-of-reform human assembly and the unseen reality of the Church in perfect union with her Lord. The Church we see is the community constituted in and by Jesus Christ living with hopeful confidence now, and is also the first fruits, the dawning of the coming kingdom. We look to heavenly realities as our hearts yearn to live God’s wisdom and revelation in the world. Significantly, Paul states this *glorious inheritance* is *among the saints*. Jesus invites everyone to himself and gives us an inheritance unfettered by social class, ethnic or racial origin, gender, geographic location, time, or any other distinction. The saints reveal that being a follower of Jesus is not only possible in every imaginable situation but gloriously fruitful in every circumstance, even if we ourselves do not see it.

Finally, Paul reminds us of *the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe*. We have only to keep on desiring with our hearts to receive from God, serve God, live the promises of God so that in and through us God’s mercy is made real, God is glorified, and many are saved. Our desire is to be of maximum service to God and those around us.

May the *...eyes of our hearts be enlightened with God’s wisdom and revelation, so that we may know the hope to which he has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe.*

Blessing and honor, thanksgiving and praise, more than we can offer, more than we can conceive be yours, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by all angels, all mortals, all creatures, now and for ever. Amen.