**New Kilpatrick**

**YouTube**

**19th March 2023**

**Job 28:1-20**

**Gathering**

O how fickle we are

With our desire for gold

We festoon ourselves with silver

Onyx, ruby and jade

We find value in the earth’s slow produce

Of diamond and crystal

Yet are we not looking in the wrong places

For the wrong things?

In places we cannot see

Where no light reaches?

Marvels are happening

In the dust of the earth

Yet, it is not there that wisdom is found

Then where shall we find her?

Where?

Where?

**Introduction**

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish… and thank you for the invitation to join you today…I have to confess that the passage we found ourselves knee deep in today is one that is new to me… I may have read it in the long distant past but that would have been quickly and for a bible exam…

Today… it is just the sheer poetry of wisdom… the seeking of that most valuable way of living for the bible… a treasure hunt for a diamond more valuable than anything else… and… in Job… where these words are written… a book of misery… we actually find utter beauty in its poetry… It’s not the only place in Job we find such poetry… It seems true that through the pain… we express the deepest parts of ourselves… and in faith… when we search for that which seems illusive… the words paint for us… wonder… beauty… and grace…

**Reading**

‘Surely there is a mine for silver,
    and a place for gold to be refined.

Iron is taken out of the earth,
    and copper is smelted from ore.

Miners put an end to darkness,
    and search out to the farthest bound
    the ore in gloom and deep darkness.

They open shafts in a valley away from human habitation;
    they are forgotten by travellers,
    they sway suspended, remote from people.

As for the earth, out of it comes bread;
    but underneath it is turned up as by fire.

Its stones are the place of sapphires,
    and its dust contains gold.

‘That path no bird of prey knows,
    and the falcon’s eye has not seen it.

The proud wild animals have not trodden it;
    the lion has not passed over it.

‘They put their hand to the flinty rock,
    and overturn mountains by the roots.

They cut out channels in the rocks,
    and their eyes see every precious thing.

The sources of the rivers they probe;
    hidden things they bring to light.

‘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.

The deep says, “It is not in me”,
    and the sea says, “It is not with me.”

It cannot be bought for gold,
 and silver cannot be weighed out as its price.

It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,
    in precious onyx or sapphire.

Gold and glass cannot equal it,
  nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.

No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal;
    the price of wisdom is above pearls.

The chrysolite of Ethiopia cannot compare with it,
    nor can it be valued in pure gold.

‘Where then does wisdom come from?
    And where is the place of understanding?

**Reflection**

Sheer poetry… in the middle of Job… Such words in search for wisdom seem so different to the bulk of Job… who does not have his sorrows to seek… It is a complicated book… there is a strange pattern to it… and this is not the only place where light glows in the poetry of questions…

I have to confess… I love this… the seeking of wisdom… Humanity digs mines to look for diamonds and gold… in the darkness where no light reaches… the earth creates beauty beyond the light of day… But this is where wisdom is found… despite the long tunnels and great technology necessary to find gold and diamonds…

In the beds of rivers… in the seed beds of fields… comes hidden gems and wheat, but neither is wisdom found there…

Ask the oceans and they will say… she is not in me… Ask the sky and it will say… she is not with me…

Nor can you buy her… for no weight of silver can equal her… so where can wisdom be found… and our reading leaves it unanswered…

Wisdom is about being aware… It isn’t about being clever… but wise… having some insight beyond yourself… recognising consequences of choices… understanding humanity and nature…

Wisdom is one of the highest virtues in Hebrew… along with kindness… and justice…

So where can she be found…

When reading some background to this… every author seems to want to get to verse 28 where the answer is given… All the commentaries are rather thin on the verses we have read… and focus instead on where wisdom is found… But you can be too quick to get to the answer…

Indeed, wanting the answer… is ironic in your search for wisdom… because it is the search that brings the experience and discovery of wisdom… the paths we take reveal wisdom… and the exposure itself is where wisdom found… Wisdom is not an answer… it is a way of living… a way of being in the world… You don’t want to get to the answer too quickly… it will only disappoint… and we won’t understand it anyway without the journey…

Our passage stops before the answer… because the answer is really not the point… We’ll come to that verse soon however… but to understand it… we need to linger here… appreciate what the poet is saying… walk the walk… learn… experience… be disappointed and cheered… The path we take through the search… is where the answer begins to be revealed…

**Reading**

‘Where then does wisdom come from?
    And where is the place of understanding?

It is hidden from the eyes of all living,
    and concealed from the birds of the air.

Abaddon and Death say,
    “We have heard a rumour of it with our ears.”

‘God understands the way to it,
    and he knows its place.

For he looks to the ends of the earth,
    and sees everything under the heavens.

When he gave to the wind its weight,
   and apportioned out the waters by measure;

when he made a decree for the rain,
    and a way for the thunderbolt;

then he saw it and declared it;
    he established it, and searched it out.

And he said to humankind,
“Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
    and to depart from evil is understanding.”’

**Reflection**

And so, Wisdom does not appear to be some elixir… or magic formula… or secret knowledge… or at least isn’t meant to be secret… though it feels that way at times… when the world is run on gaining stuff… power… wealth…

Wisdom is not beyond anyone… for it is living in God…

And you can have all the intellect you like… but without wisdom… without the value of experience… and seeing beyond self… intellect is as dangerous as stupidity…

Wisdom is found… finally… and only… in the fear of the Lord… fear being awe… the recognition of and the value of creation… and the creator… the depth of love the creator has for us… and invites us into…

That is the place where wisdom begins… She is found in the wonder of the relationship… we have in God… the grace… forgiveness… justice… kindness of God…

And we find it… not in the deepest mines… or the wonder of the purest diamond… but in the wonder of a God who loves us and longs for us to be alive… fully… and grow in that aliveness… Wisdom is found… in a relationship with wonder… a wonder called God…

**News**

**Prayer**

O Lady Wisdom

Poetry that speaks into faith

Wonder that speaks into life

May we find ourselves

Where wisdom is found

To be holding us

May we be close to the light of God

And the founder of life

And the place of justice

May we be the kindness of heaven

The breath of hope

That heartbeat of truth

May we be found by you, O Wisdom

And may you call us

Into relationship with God

In such wonder

Dare we come alive again

A way of being in the world

And may we speak truth to power

Peace to conflict

Love to fear

In Ukraine and Russia

Turkey and Syria

Myanmar and Haiti

Beijing and Moscow,

Washington and Westminster

Brussels and Jerusalem

In our families and friends

Those ill and recovering

Those fearful and those afraid

Great mother of wisdom

May the world find the gift

Of life, fully life, eternal life

Hear us

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**