

THE POOR WISE MAN WHO SAVED A CITY

Text: Ecclesiastes 9:14-18

A parable is a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. Most parables are told by Jesus in the Gospels, but here is an ancient parable from the wisest man in the Old Testament, Solomon. It is the story of a besieged city that was under attack by a powerful king. This parable, like many of the stories found in the Bible, is a long on lessons, but short in explanations. One of the joys of teaching the Bible is to find out what God is saying, to whom He is addressing His subject, what is the meaning and how I may apply it to my life. Let's examine this parable together.

1. The Destitution of Leadership

In Ecclesiastes 9:15 it says, "Now there was found in it..." referring to the city that was in desperate trouble. The phrase speaks to us of a search. There seemed to be a search for leadership to help in this crisis. There is a contrast given in Ecclesiastes 9:17: "The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools." Then in the Bible records in Ecclesiastes 9:18, "Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good." As we observe the context we hear the cry of a man in the public eye surrounded by fools. We read that one willful sinner has the capacity to destroy much good. It is the man who is in leadership but who abdicates his leadership in wrong decisions. He is a man who has lost his moral compass. Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." When one lives without belief in God he or she says good-bye to all absolutes. If God does not exist, then all things are permitted. Aldous Huxley, author "A Brave New World" said, "I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning. For myself as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was...liberation from... a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.... There was one admirably simple method in our political and erotic revolt: We could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever."

Last year according to a new Gallup survey more Americans are accepting previously controversial relationships like same-sex couples, having a baby outside of marriage and premarital sex. Comparing responses from 2001 to 2015, more

people are accepting same-sex relationships - climbing from 40 percent in 2001 to more 63 percent.

Barna research says, "A majority of American adults across age group, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and political ideology expresses concern about the nation's moral condition — eight in 10 overall (80 percent)." Barna President, David Kinnaman contends that research indicates a new brand of morality has evolved in America. He insists that Christianity has for the most part been removed as the cultures' moral norm and replaced with a new moral code, which he says consists of six tenets:

1. The best way of finding yourself is by looking within yourself.
2. People should not criticize someone else's life choices.
3. To be fulfilled in life, you should pursue the things you desire most.
4. The highest goal of life is to enjoy it as much as possible.
5. People can believe whatever they want, as long as those beliefs don't affect society.
6. Any kind of sexual expression between two consenting adults is acceptable.

Never before in American history has there been such a dearth in leadership. From Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington to Main Street, U.S.A.; from the pulpit to the pew; from the professor to the student; from Wall Street to Rural Route delivery – America is out of control.

The answer for America is a spiritual one. God says in Ezekiel 22:30, "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none."

II. The Design of the Enemy

Ecclesiastes 9:14 says, "There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it." We see there is a notorious king who has a design to capture and destroy this city and we presume, according to the customs of that day, he will kill many of the warriors and bring the survivors under his total dominion.

Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The book of the Revelation describes Satan in Revelation 9:11, "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." Apollyon means "Destroyer." Peter warns us in I Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Why would the Devil want to destroy America and her reputation? Take note of these documented quotes:

Benjamin Franklin declared, "Whosoever shall introduce into public affairs the principles of primitive Christianity will change the face of the world."

John Quincy Adams confirmed, "The highest glory of the American Revolution was this: it connected, in one indissoluble bond, the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity."

You may find this hard to believe, but in 1883 the Illinois Supreme Court made this statement, "Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of the Redeemer of mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise. In this sense and to this extent, our civilizations and our institutions are emphatically Christian."

Woven in the warp and woof of our country is Christianity. No nation like America has sent missionaries and the Word of God abroad like America. Jesus said in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The goal of Christ is to get the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth and then judgment, which includes judgment against Satan. America has led the way for attempting to get the Gospel out for the past two centuries. The Devil knows it and is therefore trying his best to thwart the plan of God. America has partnered with God these many years until recently.

III. The Despised Hero

Ecclesiastes 9:15 reads, "Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." In Ecclesiastes 9:16b reiterates, "...the poor man's wisdom is despised." This is not the king, why he wasn't even a man about town. Solomon said he was a poor, but wise man. Prosperity is not ultimate evidence of spirituality or wisdom.

Even though readers of this story written almost one thousand years before the birth of Christ may not know this man's name, God knows who he is.

Fifteen years ago many of our public servants showed they were men and women of the "right stuff." Lately many of our first responders are not looked at with the respect they deserve, but because they are made of the right stuff, they keep responding with mercy and help for those who cannot help themselves.

IV. The Deliverance of Wisdom

Ecclesiastes 9:15a declares, "Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city...." Jesus said, "Search the

scriptures...they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39a, c). We see a story beyond our story.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (II Corinthians 8:9). Christ was the ultimate man of wisdom, who though He was rich, left His throne of glory to be sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21); He was rejected so that we might be saved and accepted (Isaiah 53:3-11).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.