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**O Come, Wisdom of God!**

**Series: O Come!**

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I. Introduction

- A. My dear wife has two gifts
  - 1. Now, she has many more gifts than just two
    - a. But two come to mind as we explore the message this morning
  - 2. One is that she is responsive to detail
    - a. She is a detail person
    - b. I'm a big picture person; she is a detail person
    - c. We balance each other in that regard
    - d. But she is sensitive to detail
    - e. She will notice what other ordinary people might not see
  - 3. The other gift is that she has the gift of wisdom
    - a. She can tell in advance whether a particular course of action is a good idea or not
    - b. I'm not sure whether this gift is a spiritual gift
    - c. Or just one of the benefits of growing up in her household with her parents who were always quick to opine about what kinds of behavior would result in catastrophe
    - d. But whatever the source, she can usually see the end result of a course of action
- B. These two gifts come together in a remarkable way when we watch movies
  - 1. Now, we enjoy watching movies
    - a. The movies themselves can be entertaining
    - b. But it's also entertaining to watch them with her
  - 2. Because she is so responsive to detail, she will react to the actions of the characters, sometimes audibly so
    - a. She is every director's dream
    - b. Whatever emotion the director seeks to evoke in the audience, she is quick to deliver
  - 3. And because she has the gift of wisdom, she can see the outcome of decisions that the characters make long before the consequences unfold
  - 4. So, when you put those two gifts together, she has been known, as the movie plot unfolds, to tell the protagonist, "No! Don't do that! He's a crook! Don't believe him!"
  - 5. And when I say, "Hon, it's a movie. It's in the script"
    - a. Doesn't matter; she's every director's dream
- C. Wisdom is one of those attributes that is critically important in life

1. Much more important than in the movies
- D. It involves the quality of knowing what kinds of activities would best lead to the most favorable outcomes
  1. To the accomplishment of one's goals
  2. Which is essentially the biblical definition of wisdom
- E. Wisdom is distinguishable from knowledge, although knowledge is necessary for wisdom
  1. Philosophers would say that knowledge is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for wisdom
  2. All of us know some very brilliant people
    - a. But who make some really foolish decisions
  3. Supremely knowledgeable people, who in their craft are at the pinnacle of their professional expertise
    - a. But whose personal lives are a shambles
  4. They have knowledge, but no wisdom
- F. As we come to this third Sunday of Advent, we have been working our way through the wonderful Advent hymn, **O Come, O Come, Emmanuel**
  1. We've doing it verse by verse; one verse each Sunday
  2. And this Sunday we become engaged with the issue of Wisdom
- G. O Come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
  1. And order all things far and nigh;
  2. To us the path of knowledge show,
  3. And cause us in her ways to go.
  4. Rejoice! Rejoice!
  5. Emmanuel
  6. Shall come to thee, O Israel.

## II. **Christ, Wisdom Personified**

- A. The first thing we notice about Wisdom in this hymn, is that Wisdom is not an abstract concept
  1. Wisdom is a person
    - a. Wisdom is one of the titles given for Messiah Jesus
  2. So, Christ is the personification of Wisdom
- B. And, as the personification of Wisdom, the hymn reflects the prologue of the gospel of John
- C. **John 1:1** (ESV) —
  1. 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
  2. Here Messiah Jesus is personified as the Word
- D. **Word = logos (Gk)**
  1. It's hard to imagine a more studied word, in both theology and philosophy, than logos
  2. It's simple meaning is, well, "word", or sometimes, "message"
    - a. But its use in ancient Greek goes far beyond the common use of "word"

- b. It involves concepts like “reason” – that’s the connection between logos and our idea of logic
  - 3. But even beyond that, the ancient Greeks looked for a governing principle in the world
    - a. A way in which the world was ordered and made sense
  - 4. It even came to mean the nature of reality
    - a. An intelligible law of things which provides meaning
  - 5. Even a means by which the Prime Mover, the deity, is known and understood
    - a. The power by which the world is formed
  - 6. Philo, the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, gave logos a particular Hebrew meaning as coming from God
    - a. A being who functions as a high priest on behalf of humanity before God
  - 7. Other Jewish influences saw logos as the revelation from God, in which God speaks
    - a. It also refers to the Divine act of creation
    - b. And by implication, the Wisdom through which God designed the cosmos
- E. So, when John uses the logos to refer to Messiah Jesus in his gospel prologue, he identifies the Word with God Himself, and speaks of Him as the Creator
  - 1. **John 1:1–4** (ESV) —
    - a. 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
    - b. 2 He was in the beginning with God.
    - c. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
    - d. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- F. Eric Voegelin: The invocation of Christ as “Wisdom from on high”... highlights His role as the divine Logos, the eternal wisdom through whom creation was formed and ordered...this wisdom, embodied in the Incarnation, transcends human understanding and provides the means by which humanity is restored to communion with God. Christ is not merely a teacher or prophet; He is the personification of divine wisdom, offering knowledge and the power to transform and save.
- G. “O Come, Thou Wisdom from on high...”

### III. **Wisdom of God**

- A. “Thou Wisdom from on high”
  - 1. This is the wisdom from on high
    - a. This is God’s Wisdom
    - b. Not merely human wisdom taken to another level
    - c. This is qualitatively a different Wisdom
  - 2. Isaiah 55:9 (ESV) — 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

- B. The Wisdom of God, you see, turns human wisdom on its head
  - 1. Human wisdom exalts power, position, and pride
    - a. But the incarnation is the opposite
  - 2. The incarnation destroys human pride
    - a. And is the only true way in which sinful humanity can be redeemed
- C. Just think of Caesar Augustus
  - 1. The most powerful man on the planet at the time
    - a. Moving human beings around like pawns on a chess board
  - 2. He calls for a census to be taken throughout the empire
    - a. All most likely as a strategy for taxation
    - b. And regardless of who you were, or how inconvenient your circumstances, you had to be in the town of your birth to be properly registered
  - 3. So Joseph and Mary, living hand-to-mouth as they were as a poor carpenter's family in Nazareth, had to make the trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the city of David, for Joseph was of the lineage of David
    - a. It was a three day trip on foot and by donkey
    - b. And on top of that, Mary, Joseph's betrothed, was nine months pregnant
    - c. I remember Jean and I making a trip from Columbus, Ohio to Pittsburgh when she was nine months pregnant with our son Matthew for my brother's wedding
    - d. That was a three hour trip by car – and that was difficult enough that it gave us second thoughts about going at all
    - e. But here was Joseph and Mary, enduring the staggering journey from Galilee, through Samaria, into Judea, until landing in Bethlehem
    - f. Only to find out that somebody had lost their hotel reservation
    - g. So they had to hang out with the animals
  - 4. All the while, Caesar Augustus was hanging out in his palace in luxury
    - a. Orchestrating events for his own selfish purposes
  - 5. But what does the Wisdom of God do?
    - a. He uses the self-serving decree of Caesar to bring to birth of One who we be King of kings and Lord of lords
    - b. And in the process, fulfill the prophecy of Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (**Micah 5.2**)
- D. And just think of the humility of it all
  - 1. A young Hebrew girl, by all accounts a teenager
    - a. Without family resources or support
  - 2. And a devout, poor Hebrew blue collar worker
    - a. Seeking to do the right thing to care for a woman and child that he himself had not sired
  - 3. Making the sacrifice, taking the journey
    - a. Arriving in Bethlehem
    - b. Landing in a stable of sorts

- c. Delivering a child in the most humble of circumstances
  - 4. That's the way God's wisdom works
- E. This child who would grow up in poverty
  - 1. Who never owned any property of His own
  - 2. Would capture the imagination of a generation of Jews in Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem
  - 3. But then, go to the cross, dying a criminal's death
    - a. Bearing, in the process, the just punishment for the sins of all those who would ever believe in Him
  - 4. And only then, be raised from the dead
  - 5. This is the personification of divine Wisdom!
- F. **1 Corinthians 1:18–25** (ESV) —
  - 1. 18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
  - 2. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."
  - 3. 20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?
  - 4. 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.
  - 5. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,
  - 6. 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,
  - 7. 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
  - 8. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
- G. Eric Voegelin: In Christ's birth, divine wisdom confronts the folly of human pride and sin.... Born in a humble manger, Christ embodies a divine logic that subverts human expectations. His humility exposes the emptiness of earthly pride, while His life demonstrates that true wisdom lies in service, sacrifice, and love. This contrast highlights the profundity of God's plan, where weakness becomes strength, and the last are made first, revealing a wisdom that surpasses human comprehension.
- H. **1 Corinthians 1:27–31** (ESV) —
  - 1. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;
  - 2. 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,
  - 3. 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.
  - 4. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,
  - 5. 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."
- I. The incarnation, the birth of Messiah Jesus, exudes the Wisdom from God
  - 1. Because, after all, Christ is Wisdom incarnate

- a. The embodiment, the personification, of divine Wisdom

#### IV. Wisdom of Order

- A. And then, this Wisdom from God is also the Wisdom of order
- B. O Come, Thou Wisdom, from on high
  - 1. And order all things far and nigh
- C. This Wisdom, this logos of God, this ordering principle of the universe
  - 1. He has been the agent of creation
    - a. Which we've already seen in John's prologue
  - 2. John 1:1–4 (ESV) —
    - a. 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
    - b. 2 He was in the beginning with God.
    - c. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
    - d. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- D. John's prologue, of course, echoes the creation account itself as described in Genesis 1
  - 1. Genesis 1:1 (ESV) —
    - a. 1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
  - 2. John 1:1 (ESV) —
    - a. 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- E. What, then, did God do in the beginning?
  - 1. Genesis 1:1–2 (ESV) —
    - a. 1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
    - b. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep....
  - 2. The primordial creation was chaos
    - a. Without form
    - b. Void
    - c. Darkness
  - 3. And yet, God sought to bring order out of the chaos
    - a. Bring cosmos out of chaos
  - 4. Genesis 1:1–2 (ESV) —
    - a. 1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
    - b. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.
    - c. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.
  - 5. The Spirit of God – the Holy Spirit
    - a. Who is revealed to us in the New Testament as the Spirit of Christ
    - b. Hovering over the chaos
    - c. And then what?
  - 6. Well, God spoke
    - a. Logos – the Word, the revelation of God

- b. Whose power is implicit, always accomplishing what the Deity intends
  - 7. **Isaiah 55:11** (ESV) —
    - a. I1 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
- F. And order the chaos He did!
  - 1. On the first day Wisdom created light
    - a. He separated the light from the darkness
    - b. Distinguished between day and night
    - c. Bringing order out of the darkness
  - 2. On the second day Wisdom created the expanse, which He called heaven, the atmosphere above the earth
    - a. And separated the heaven from the waters below
    - b. Bringing order out of the material mass which would become our planet
  - 3. On the third day Wisdom created the earth in the midst of the waters
    - a. And produced the plant kingdom according to their kinds
    - b. Bringing order to life in the vegetation
  - 4. On the fourth day Wisdom created lights to govern the days and nights
    - a. Bringing governing order to the light He created on the first day
  - 5. On the fifth day Wisdom created living creatures to govern the domains of creation He had created on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> days
    - a. Birds flying through the heavens
    - b. Sea creatures patrolling the waters
    - c. Bringing, again, order out of the chaos
  - 6. And then, on the sixth day, Wisdom created livestock
    - a. Animals to domesticate, enabling the management of the planet
    - b. Which would culminate in the grandest creation of all – human beings
    - c. Made in the image of God
    - d. Giving human beings dominion – governing authority over all of creation
    - e. To be fruitful, creative beings
    - f. Continuing the ordering of this new world as image bearers of the divine Wisdom, the divine orderer
- G. So, this Wisdom is the Wisdom of order
  - 1. Bringing order out of chaos
    - a. From the very beginning
    - b. From the start of creation itself
- H. But this Wisdom continues the ordering even now
  - 1. He does it in our own lives
    - a. In our own disordered lives
  - 2. Taking the chaos of our sin-soaked disasters, and bringing order to our souls

- a. The way no other human psychology, or behavioral process, or medical breakthrough could possibly do
  - 3. Bringing forgiveness, purpose and hope to a world thirsty for true redemption
- I. O Come, Thou Wisdom, from on high
  - 1. And order all things far and nigh...

V. **Wisdom and Knowledge**

- A. We have made the observation that there is a relationship between wisdom and knowledge
  - 1. They are not the same
    - a. But wisdom is the right use of knowledge
    - b. Knowledge used in the best way in order for one's purposes to be realized, one's goals to be fulfilled
  - 2. Knowledge provides the raw materials through which the divine Wisdom produces fruitful and meaningful living
    - a. Knowledge provides the means by which Wisdom does its work
- B. O Come, Thou Wisdom, from on high
  - 1. And order all things far and nigh;
  - 2. **To us the path of knowledge show...**
- C. Wisdom, the Logos, the Word, teaches
  - 1. It reveals the will of God
    - a. It leads us through uncharted waters by the revelation of His Word
- D. Whatever else Messiah Jesus came to do – and He came to save us from our sin by the sacrifice of Himself –
  - 1. He also came to teach and to preach
  - 2. **Matthew 4:23** (ESV) —
    - a. 23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom ...
- E. And when Messiah Jesus taught, He taught unlike anyone else
  - 1. **Matthew 7:28–29** (ESV) —
    - a. 28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,
    - b. 29 for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.
- F. Indeed, teaching was the main business of His earthly ministry
  - 1. **Matthew 11:1** (ESV) —
    - a. 1 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.
- G. He taught His disciples
  - 1. And He taught the larger body of disciples
  - 2. And He taught the crowds
  - 3. He even taught those who would become His enemies
    - a. Those who would reject His teaching
- H. He taught in various ways



1. Using signs and wonders to illustrate who He is as the Light of the World, the Resurrection and the Life, and the Bread of Life
  2. Using parables to connect ordinary people with spiritual truth using everyday elements and activities
  3. Using direct, explicit instruction to explain the mystery of His parables to His disciples
- I. But all these, the Logos, the Wisdom from God, gave us the raw materials by which we could navigate the dangerous waters of life in the dark world
- J. Eric Voegelin: The teachings and example of Christ provide the knowledge necessary to live in communion with God, a central aim of divine wisdom. Through His parables, sermons, and actions, Christ illuminates the path to salvation, calling humanity to repentance, faith, and love.... the Sermon on the Mount encapsulates the ethical and spiritual vision of divine wisdom, challenging believers to embody the Beatitudes and pursue the kingdom of God. In this way, Christ as Wisdom offers both instruction and inspiration, enabling His followers to align their lives with God's will.

## VI. **Wisdom of Transformation**

- A. And yet, knowledge and wisdom always has a purpose
1. And that purpose is transformation
  2. Transformation that will never let us stay the same
- B. O come, Thou Wisdom, from on high,
1. And order all things far and nigh;
  2. To us the path of knowledge show,
  3. **And cause us in her ways to go.**
- C. We're here to worship God, to exalt Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit
1. And every part of every worship service is the teaching of the Word of God
  2. But the goal of instruction is always transformation
    - a. To never let you be the same when you leave as when you enter this sacred space
- D. Transformation by the ministry of the Word of God is why do everything we do!
1. **1 Timothy 1:5** (NASB95) —
    - a. 5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
  2. **Romans 12:2** (ESV) —
    - a. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
  3. **2 Corinthians 3:18** (ESV) —
    - a. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
  4. In other words, this comes from Wisdom incarnate!
    - a. Our prayer is that Wisdom will "cause us in her ways to go"

- E. Eric Voegelin: Ultimately, the birth of Christ as the embodiment of divine wisdom illuminates the path toward eternal communion with God. His life and teachings guide believers toward holiness, His death and resurrection secure their redemption, and His ongoing presence through the Holy Spirit continues to teach and transform. The hymn's invocation of Wisdom from on high is thus a prayer for the fullness of Christ's work in the world—a plea for His guidance, illumination, and transformative power to lead His people into the eternal light of God's presence. This divine wisdom, incarnate in Christ, remains the foundation of faith, hope, and love, directing all creation toward its ultimate fulfillment in God.

- F. O come, Thou Wisdom, from on high  
1. And order all things far and nigh;  
2. To us the path of knowledge show,  
3. And cause us in her ways to go.  
4. Rejoice! Rejoice!  
5. Emmanuel,  
6. Shall come to thee, O Israel.