

Sermon Discussion Questions & Follow-up Notes
January 21, 2024
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Sermon Texts for Epiphany 3: Mark 1:14-15 and Proverbs 30:1-9
Title: “How to Be Wise?” / Series: “Stay Curious”

Core Observations of the Texts

- 1. The name:** “Agur” means ‘gatherer’ and can carry the connotation of one who travels or sojourns. Probably this name is a metaphor, encouraging us to ponder how every true follower of God is on a journey and has not yet arrived at God and His wisdom.
- 2. Two sides of wisdom:** This text includes vocabulary that presents wisdom as a combination of “understanding” and “prudence”. The former (understanding) means ‘the ability to live in accordance with the forces and patterns of this world’, and the latter (prudence) means the Sherlock-Holmes-like ability to notice and attend to the significant but easily overlooked dynamics happening around you. Taken together, wisdom means that you can do right by others, God and yourself in any and every situation because you follow God’s patterns in your particular situation.
- 3. Wisdom goes beyond morality and information:** In v8-9, Agur announces his dedication to God’s Word. To Agur, the ultimate aim of God’s Word is not merely to give us a morality nor to give us information; rather it aims to make us wise (in the sense outlined in the previous point).
- 4. A summary of Jesus’ message:** Mark 1:14-15 present the tightest summary of everything Jesus preached. In that cultural context, to claim kingship was a claim to legal, social and political wisdom.

Questions to Ponder

- 1. Patterns exist in this world:** The statement was made in the sermon that it is increasingly popular in our culture to claim that no observable patterns exist in this world. For example, many now claim there is no pattern to what it means to be “boy” / “girl”; nor pattern to how authority should function; nor principles for running a healthy society (whether a family, church, city, etc.). Where do you see a war against “patterns” afoot today? What do we lose when we bow to the prevailing cultural idea that one pattern may work for one person but a different pattern is valid for another person?
- 2. The wisdom paradox:** Though we as Christians claim there are patterns in God’s world, we musn’t claim to have full knowledge of them. After all, a “fool” in Proverbs is not simply someone who lacks wisdom but rather is someone who claims to be wise where/when they are not (see, for example, Prov 26:12). By contrast, one is on the path of wisdom when they realize specific ways they not yet wise. How can you cultivate a hunger & teachability towards wisdom in 2024, without being falsely humble?
- 3. A life of moderation:** Do you agree with Agur that the wisest people are typically found among those the world considers rather average (i.e., of modest finances, beauty and fame)?
- 4. Wisdom embodied:** Jesus is wise for us. How have you found this to be true in your life?

Notes: For a 40-something Einstein’s letter to Neils Bohr (see Isaacson, *Einstein*, see chs 14-15).