

Tonight/today we want to apply the harvest principle to another area of our lives, an extremely practical area of our lives that the Bible talks about all the time, wisdom. Our first reading from the book of Daniel; and Daniel is a prophet of the Old Testament; the book of Daniel is his story. The Back-story to the book is in the fifth century BC Babylon, modern-day Iraq, was the most powerful empire in all of the world, and in 587 BC, the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, effectively bringing to an end the kingdom of Judah, and forcing most of the Jewish residents there into exile.

In the first part, we hear Daniel's story, and we learned that he and his friends go to great lengths, to heroic lengths to maintain their faith and their fidelity toward God despite the persecution and hostility of the Babylonian culture and the, sometimes, fierce displeasure of the king.

Second half of the book contains a series of visions and prophecies that Daniel experiences. He records these visions of the future and how God would act in the future on behalf of Israel. The scripture we're looking at today is one of those visions.

Daniel is using a language that is unfamiliar to us, describing realities that are perplexing to us. The book of Daniel is a style of literature called apocalyptic. And apocalyptic literature can be found throughout the Bible. It always includes visions of the future filled with symbolism,

but always with a purpose and how it applies for us today.

Here's what Daniel says,

¹*“At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence...”*

Daniel 12: 1

Daniel is describing the end time, the end of the world. And the central figure in this time will be St. Michael the Archangel, who we know from elsewhere in scripture, though an angel is also a warrior for God's army. He is a serious warrior, the leader of the heavenly host. And from scripture and tradition, we know that he shows up whenever serious stuff is going down. So, Daniel is looking ahead to this end time, a time he describes as one “of anguish, such as has never occurred”. Sadly, or unfortunately, that part is not difficult for us to imagine given the terror in Pittsburgh, with the shooting in the Tree of Life Synagogue a few weeks ago.

But Daniel is describing a reality that everyone will experience. However, not everyone will experience it in the same way. Some can expect distress and disgrace and reproach.

³*Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.*

Daniel 12: 3

Daniel's looking ahead to trouble and distress, which the future will bring for everyone, but not everyone will have the same experience.

Some are going to be beat up by it, some are going to be overcome by it, but one group will be at a unique and unparalleled advantage to everybody else. Daniel calls them the wise. Daniel says that those who cultivate wisdom, who live wisely, will enjoy success in favor no matter what. He compares them to stars shining brightly in the darkness of the night sky. Today, we're looking at sowing seeds of wisdom.

What is wisdom? Well, it's a combination, actually. It's a combination of knowledge and experience with understanding. If you expressed it as a math equation, it would go like this. Knowledge and experience plus understanding equal wisdom. So, everybody's got knowledge. Everybody knows something. Everybody has experience, things happen to everybody, but not everybody understands what it is they're experiencing. Not everybody understands what it is they're being exposed to.

Understanding applied to our experience and knowledge which again equals wisdom. And there are two facts of life that wise people do understand better than anybody else. First fact, we will face trouble in life. Trouble is a certainty of life. Now, maybe we're sitting there thinking, "Well, Fr. can't you be more positive?" Okay, I'm positive that we will

have troubles in our life. Trouble, difficulty, and ultimately, frankly, death are certainties of life. And sooner or later they're headed into our life. That's the bad news. The good news is another fact of life, a second fact, we can sow seeds of wisdom now in anticipation of the trouble to come that strategically sets us up to better deal with it.

I see this all the time. I see it most clearly, actually, at funerals. When I celebrate funeral liturgies, inevitably, they fall out one way or the other. The one hand: funerals of people who lived with wisdom. Those funerals are different. No matter the situation, no matter the context, no matter the circumstances, those funerals are inevitably different. Not very long ago, I did a funeral for a young woman. She was 41 years old. Her name was Laura; Laura died in a violent car accident on highway 34 at midnight, and it was, of course, a sad occasion. It was a very sad occasion – I was called at 1am by the grieving mother to come pray with the family. As I entered their home I saw Laura's mom and stepdad, her brother and sister, and grandparents. They were all in shock and tears as the OPP officers were leaving after completing their portion of the investigation. There was no getting away from the sadness of that occasion. But Laura's parents, suffering a heartbreaking loss that few of us could scarcely imagine, yet they carried themselves with such strength and nobility that they were actually a comfort to the rest of us.

In fact, they were an inspiration. They were, especially, strong for the many young people who showed up filled with grief as you can imagine. Those parents showed great concern and care for Laura's friends, despite the weight of their own grief. In fact, there not only fully participated in all the responses and songs at the Funeral Mass but also there were present the next day at their regular Sunday Mass – right in the front row where they usually sat.

A few weeks later I spoke to the mother, as I was shopping for groceries. I asked her how she remained so strong. Her answer didn't surprise me one bit. She said, "Father, if I didn't have my Faith and trust in God I would be a lost soul. But because I trust in God's promise for my family that God will take care of Laura's soul I find true hope." Wow – what wisdom!

Now, I'm not criticizing anybody. Everybody grieves differently and they deserve our respect to do so, but I think this story underscore two very different approaches to life. We can't prevent trouble and turmoil and distress and death. We are all promised two things in life: death and taxes. Eventually, it's headed our way. What we can do is prepare for it. We can sow seeds of wisdom now so that when it comes our way, we're ready. We are able to survive. We can even thrive through difficulties and challenges.

How do we do that? Well, we can apply a certain kind of understanding that

understands eternity, an eternal perspective when it comes to our knowledge and our experience. We can learn to view life through the lens of eternity.

That's the very best way to look at life. That's what Daniel did. That's how he lived his life. That's what he's talking about in his stories. He's talking about viewing life through the lens of eternity. We can live our lives that way too. Wisdom is all about selecting the eternal and then fitting in the now. Wise people build their lives around what's eternal and then they squeeze in the temporary. You know, sports, and style, and clothes, and cars, and yes, even video games, believe it or not, are temporary.

There are good things, they're important things, but they're temporary things. At the same time, accidents, delays, dangerous disease, death, terrorism, they're bad things for sure, but they're temporary things too. They will pass away, they will come to an end. They have a limited shelf life. Only God and God's people are eternal.

Of course, the remaining question this evening/morning is, how we you do that? How do we sow seeds of wisdom? How do we get that lens of eternity focused on our experience and what we're learning? By begin to sow seeds of wisdom through prayer. Prayer is foundational.

And when we talk about prayer, we've talked about a two important

approaches. The first is, setting daily quiet time, which includes talking to God and listening to him and the best way to listen to him is through reading His scripture. With daily quiet time we match it with our participating at Holy Mass here in our church. A lot of people, despite their very best efforts, don't pray. And they don't pray because they think they don't have the time. A lot of people don't come to church, as statistics tell us. And they don't come to church simply because they believe they don't have time.

What they're doing is focusing on the temporary things over the eternal thing. When we reverse that through our daily quiet time and participating in our weekly Sunday Mass, we learn to see our life differently. We look at our life through a different lens. It's the lens of eternity and that is really what wisdom is, isn't it? It's about seeing differently.

Really, the only challenge that we've been presenting through this series is for us to take time to consider what seeds we're sowing in our life. This weekend we can ask ourselves do we sow seeds of the temporary or seeds of eternity. For each and every day time passes as eternity approaches.

It's important to acknowledge another reality that's more important and it's more powerful too. It's the reality of God's grace and mercy. A reality that trumps everything. A principle that teaches us that we are not defined by our past. We not the

sum total of our mistakes and sins. That we were made for more; we were made for heaven; we were made to be with God forever.