

Monday, January 3, 2022

Read Proverbs 1:1-16

The Beginning of Knowledge

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7)

Every word of the book of Proverbs flows out of this one sentence. This is the point. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” This bold statement begs at least two important questions: (1) What is the fear of the LORD? (2) Why is this the beginning of knowledge?

So, what is the fear of the LORD? Some explain it as respect. Others see it as terror. But perhaps the best description is repentant. One who is truly repentant has sorrow over sin and knows that sin deserves everlasting punishment. Yet someone with godly repentance also looks to God in Christ trusting in the forgiveness purchased for us at the cross. This is a godly “fear of the LORD” – to have sorrow over sin and trust in Christ alone to forgive.

Why would this kind of fear be the beginning of knowledge? Such honesty about our sinfulness would lead us to humbly come before God knowing that He is the true source of life. As the giver of life, His words guide us into what life is meant to be. In humility and recognizing our tendency to fall, what we most need is to listen to God. What He has to say to us – in providing guidance, pointing out our sin, promising forgiveness and life in Christ – this is what we truly need to hear. Any true knowledge or wisdom comes from God, and we can only receive it as we humbly trust in Him. Such a reality leads us to prayer as we begin this new year seeking wisdom and knowledge from Him.

Prayer – Dear God, I am always tempted toward foolishly believing that I have all the answers. Humble me, Lord. Show me my sin and my need for You. According to Your mercy, forgive me in Christ, and lead me to hear Your Word and be shaped by it. Teach me daily that true wisdom is not found in me, but in You and Your Word. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, January 4, 2022

Read Proverbs 1:17-30

The Fool

To King Solomon, the “fool” is the one who despises God who looks to his own interest and ignores God. How often I find myself falling into that same thought pattern. I worry about my “needs”, about what I want, or what I am afraid of. So often I find myself looking away from the One who is worth looking at.

But Solomon knows there is a counterpart to the “fool”, that is the one who follows “wisdom”. God brings wisdom to those who place their trust in Him. God has come among us, lived among us, accepted our limitations without failing like we have and always do. Jesus is God, come to us. He brings guidance, direction to us, a way to avoid the perils of evil in our lives. And then He changes us! Gives us more than guidance, He comes into our hearts, provides the fire, the ways of Life. Then the “foolish” past seems so strange and undesirable.

Yes, that is the wisdom I want; that is the kind of life that lasts - forever. He brings freedom from rebellion against God. He brings His Word, in the Bible, to teach my mind and my heart to listen to Him. Then I realize that what I truly want, what I truly need, is only Him. Fear vanishes as I realize I love Him. Then I too laugh at the devil’s attempts to scare me - how could He, I have the Victor keeping me safe from those deceptions.

Prayer: Thank you God for Your Wisdom that You share so easily with Your children. Please keep me always in Your ways. Amen

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, January 5, 2022

Read Proverbs 2:1-22

Seeking Wisdom and the Paths of Uprightness

If you look around our world today, there are a lot of different people or communities that claim to be the source of wisdom. And not all of these sources of wisdom are bad! In fact, many are quite good. We often follow the advice of meteorologists, doctors, investment managers, scientists, law enforcement, teachers, and many others. But our reading today reminds us that true wisdom must be sought after.

Proverbs 2:4-5 tells us that **“if you seek wisdom and understanding like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.”** But where should we search? A lot of people in our world would tell us to look inside ourselves. “Follow your heart!” is pretty common advice, and it often sounds like a good idea! But when it comes to the wisdom of God, that wisdom actually comes from outside of us—it comes to us in God’s words and commands. This is why spending time in God’s word is the best way to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of God.

As 2:6 says: **“For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”** God’s word, his guidance, and his wisdom keep us on the paths of uprightness and righteousness. And he keeps us away from the crooked paths of sin and death, and instead guides us on the path to eternal life with him.

It can sometimes be hard to know the right path to take, or what decision to make. But if we remember to consider what God says in his word, and pray, our anxieties and fears about life’s decisions are made much easier. And no matter what happens, God will never abandon us.

Prayer: Lord, give me a desire to seek your word and to follow your wisdom. Keep me on the paths of uprightness. Guard me from sin and help me cast all my anxieties on you. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

January 6, 2022

Read: Proverbs 3:1-18

Trust in the Lord

The message of this passage is a rather simple one though it is also difficult for us to swallow. Trust in God. Because God is God and I am not, and He is for me.

Many people today seem to think that they've got God and this whole "faith" thing figured out. They'll say, "God loves me because I'm a Christian and now He's not going to let anything bad happen to me." While there's a small kernel of truth to this, there's a rather big problem: bad things still happen. Natural disasters occur, crimes are committed, and bad things happen to good people every day. Soon, people who were so comfortable with their willing and serving God begin to question and fall away from faith. They realize that God doesn't make sense. They'll ask, "Where is God? Why is He allowing this? This doesn't make sense. God must not care. A loving God must not exist." Human wisdom pushes them away from faith.

In writing this proverb, Solomon seems to be reflecting on the vanity of human wisdom. What can one do with earthly understanding? For all the wisdom in the world, one still can't find "favor" and "good success" before God. Only God's steadfast love and faithfulness can do that. It's not us at all! Nothing we say, do, or even understand can lead to favor in God's eyes! In fact, not only do we always fall short of God's favor, we constantly push ourselves away from God. Because of our sinful nature, everything we do is soaked in sin. We naturally reject Him. So even our most seemingly righteous works and our good intentions are all just sorry and sinful shortcomings. All our wisdom and understanding are corrupted by sin.

So, what can we do? How can we "bind steadfast love and faithfulness around our necks"? Solomon tells us exactly what we can do. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding". We can't do anything! No matter our pride, wisdom, or power, all we can do is trust that God will deliver us from our sinful nature. And He did. He sent His own Son, Jesus, to deliver His steadfast love and faithfulness to us. And on the cross, He paid the price in full so now we have them for free. Unlike Solomon, we don't need to simply trust that one day God would deliver His. No, instead we can trust that His grace has already been delivered through Jesus Christ and is ours right now and forevermore. Trust in the LORD not only with fear, but also with thanksgiving, hope, and joy because He is God, and you are not. Trust in Him because He loves you and is for you. Trust in Him because He sent His Son to redeem a world that is so far from deserving redemption. Trust in Him because He doesn't make sense.

Prayer: Who puts his trust in God most just hath built his house securely. He who relies on Jesus Christ shall reach His heaven most surely. Then fixed on Thee, my trust shall be, for Thy truth cannot alter. While mine Thou art, not death's worst smart shall make my courage falter.

-Who Puts His Trust in God Most Just by Joachim Magdeburg

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, January 7, 2022

Read Proverbs 3:19-35

By Wisdom

As a rule, I try to make everything I write relate back to Christ. Sometimes this is difficult, sometimes very easy. In the book of Proverbs, it is usually difficult, but Proverbs 3:19 makes that task very easy. From the very earliest days of the church, Jesus has been called the Wisdom of God (probably in reference to 1 Corinthians 1 where Christ is called the power and wisdom of God). It was through Jesus that the Father accomplishes His will, even from the first day of creation. So, we confess with John that "all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." The whole world was created through Christ and has its being in Christ. Just as our roads and bridges are held together by the wisdom of the engineers who built them, so our whole world is held together by the Wisdom of the Creator.

So Solomon in Proverbs, though on one level he is giving practical advice about how to run our lives, is also prophetically speaking of how everything we do is destined to fail without Wisdom, without Christ. He is "life for our soul" and with Him we walk on our way securely. If the Wisdom of God controls our lives, then we have no need to be afraid either of everyday dangers while we sleep or of sudden terror and the ruin of the wicked, even if that ruin is sickness and death, for the LORD is our confidence. Since we have such a great confidence, we are able to live wise lives without fear. Solomon gives us practical examples of being peaceable and not planning evil or withholding what we owe to others. All of this is possible for us because Christ is with us, and we have no need to be overly concerned with the things of this life as though money or pleasure or physical security holds our life together. We know that our lives are held together by Christ, the Wisdom of God.

Prayer: Wisdom from on high, come to us today and lead us to walk in your paths all our lives so that we may dwell secure and do righteousness as you have taught us. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, January 8, 2022

Read Proverbs 4:1-13

“Knowledge – Good and Bad”

In this proverb, Solomon speaks for the fifth time to “sons”. Are they his own children? Yes, there are details that fit that audience. Could they be King Solomon, speaking to his subjects as his “sons”? Maybe. Could it be our heavenly Father speaking words of Wisdom to us? Like so much of the Bible, there are multiple layers of listeners and messages. But, here, whoever (or Whoever) is speaking, the message entreats the listener to learn: **“Be attentive”, “Forsake not my teaching”, “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.”** He’s practically begging the hearer to be studious.

But learning can be a challenge. You might not be able to sit still in class. You might not be able to stay awake in class. You may have difficulty absorbing names, dates, and places. You could be distracted by those around you, or the ticking of the clock, or the view out the window. You may forget what you had previously known like the back of your hand. But it wasn’t always like this.

In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve perfect knowledge of Good. He walked with them; He talked with them; they learned everything they needed to know directly from their Creator. But then, they saw that God had knowledge of Good and evil, and they wanted to be like God. So they turned away from God and went to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and chose to learn evil. They already knew good; evil was all that was left. And they learned well.

And ever since then, knowing evil comes easily, while learning Good is hard. But, as God gave Solomon to his “sons” to teach and help them to gain insight into the Wisdom of God, He gave His Son to all people to personify The Way, to be Truth, and to give Life. And we have the witness of His written Word, all the saints in the Bible, the saints in the present day, and the Water, Bread, and Wine.

Solomon is extolling the value of knowing God through these gifts because knowing Him is the only cure to our knowledge of evil. The Good News has done away with the darkness! Jesus has defeated the Devil! You are a child of God and hold His teachings in your hands! **“Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.”**

Prayer: Lord God, You have given me knowledge of Your Son through Your Word and witness. Strengthen me by Your Spirit to build me up against evil by knowing You in my heart and mind. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, January 10, 2022

Read Proverbs 4:14-27 (esp. 25-27)

The Path

“Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.” (Proverbs 4:26)

Rumble strips. That’s what was on my mind when I read the closing verses of today’s reading. Rumble strips are, of course, those groves on the side of the highway that make a loud sound when you drive over them. They rumble. They get your attention.

The purpose of rumble strips is also pretty obvious. You may be daydreaming a little bit, when you should be more focused on the road. You might just be a little sloppy and take a turn too wide. You might be trying to grab a Kleenex or addressing a passenger in the backseat, and you unknowingly drift. For all sorts of reasons, you can end up just enough off of the clearly marked path and the rumbling starts to get you to pay attention and correct course.

Towards the beginning of today’s reading, Solomon advises, **“My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.”** Or at the end of the reading, **“do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.”** We are endlessly prone to swerving to the right or to the left. We could be drifting by not paying attention to Christ and His Word. We could be swerving because we intentionally put our eyes elsewhere, foolishly thinking it won’t be dangerous to put our attention elsewhere.

The trouble is that there are not always rumble strips on the path of faith (at least we don’t always notice them). We may be confronted by our sin by our Scripture readings, by a sermon, or by a friend. Foolishly desiring to set our own path, we may hear the rumbling and swerve further to the right or the left.

So today, dear son or daughter of God, here this guidance as coming from your Savior: **Be attentive to My words; incline your ear to My sayings.** Nowhere else will you find such guidance, peace, forgiveness, and life as in the words of Jesus. To swerve leads to disaster, to listen and believe and follow leads to life.

Prayer – Dear Jesus, lift my eyes to look forward, gazing straight toward You. Guide my feet by Your Word. Lead my heart by Your law and promises. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, January 11, 2022

Read Proverbs 5:1-12

Sweet Words

The falseness, the attractive, the desirability of the devil's teachings speak to my desires. "If it feels good, do it". Remember that chant, how it sounded so pleasant, just what I wanted! Life with God is a marriage for life - but my body is always willing to follow the last lie it has heard!

Sweet words allure my body, my emotions say, "go for it", but my heart remains with Jesus. It is so hard to rest on Him, He doesn't make it hard, but I make it difficult. When I remember what He has done for me, yet I want, how I want, to find an exception, to just follow that one temptation.

Disaster lies down that road! No sin is satisfied with itself, always sins bring more sin. The life I have with my Savior would be gone, washed away in my self-love - and self-love ends in hell! Hating everyone else and unhappy (to put it mildly) with itself. No, I don't want that road. I want to hold onto what God has given me, has given and supported me in. I want to stay one of His children. Begone false tongue, begone selfish desire. Let me turn away from looking in their directions, to look at my Savior. Let me see how to live His ways, how to integrate what He wants with my own desires. I am not alone; I live and abide in Jesus! With Him, I need nothing and find nothing else attractive!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, take away the love of sinning, take away that attractive nonsense the world keeps throwing at me. Thank you for your promise of being in my life. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, January 12, 2022

Read Proverbs 5:13-23

God's Will for Men and Women

As a former teacher, I must say that I love Proverbs 5:13-14. These two verses point out that failing to listen to instruction can set us up for failure. This is certainly true in school—goofing off and failing to learn leads to failed tests and decreased opportunities. How much more significant are the consequences when we fail to heed God's instructions!

God's instructions, his Word, are meant for our benefit—they steer us in the direction of morality and peace, aligned with God's will for our lives. Interestingly, this section of Proverbs 5 talks about marriage—in a somewhat different way. The water imagery emphasizes that one should be monogamous—having a single well rather than many streams of water. The Proverb goes on to speak in a somewhat sensual way—but reminds the reader to rejoice in one's spouse and to remain faithful.

Verse 22 and 23 show what happens when we are led astray by temptations—they pull us out of sync with God's will for our lives and can lead to disastrous consequences. When it comes to our sexuality, God desires us to be monogamous, and for husbands and wives to honor the marriage bed. Like all the other commands and instructions God gives to us, it's not something we always do. We're sinful people and we can't hope to be perfect. Here is where God offers forgiveness. But with his wisdom and instruction, we are taught how to conform our lives to God's will.

Prayer: Almighty God, keep me chaste and upright when it comes to your gift of sexuality. Also remind me to stay in your Word and instruction. Give me your Spirit, that I may resist temptation. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Thursday, January 6, 2022

Reading: Proverbs 6:1-19

Why am I doing this?

“Why am I doing this?” This is a question that Solomon wants his readers to ask themselves in this passage. In Proverbs 6:1-19, Solomon warns his readers against a different, more subtle type of sin: sinful intentions and motivations. Hidden sins are tricky because, well, they’re hidden. No one other than yourself, knows what your intentions are. Solomon says that doing something (even something good) with bad intentions or under sinful motivations makes the work itself sinful! Solomon then provides three examples to show you.

First, Solomon talks about loaning money. Giving money to your neighbor to help him or her out in trying times is a good deed. That is, if it’s done out of generosity. However, if it’s not done out of generosity, but instead out of greed, then that’s bad! Think of Ebenezer Scrooge from Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. In the story, Scrooge (a very wealthy man) loans large sums of money to a variety of people in need. On the surface, this seems very good and generous. But! Scrooge was, in fact, not generous! He loaned away money with the intention of receiving more money in return. The original action of giving money seemed good, but the intention was sinful and led to a sinful outcome. So instead, why should I help my neighbor? Because God told me to!

Next, Solomon talks about laziness and the importance of motivation. He raises the question: “What motivates you?” For the people Solomon is talking to, the answer is comfort. “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest” is what drives these people. To Solomon, on the other hand, we as God’s people should be motivated by the commands of God. Today, we as Christians should be motivated by the commission of Christ. We are here to serve others as Christ commanded. Not ourselves. So, why should I work and stay motivated? Because Jesus told me to!

Finally, Solomon talks about malicious people. He says that people who lie and “stir the pot” for their own selfish goals are “worthless”. Even more, once the people around you figure out that you “continually sow discord,” they will reject you. So don’t do that! Instead, tell the truth and honestly engage with the people around you. Why should I do that? Because God wants me to!

Intentions and motivations are hidden things, but nonetheless very powerful. Wisdom is remembering to ask yourself, “Why am I doing this?” and then answering, “Because God told me to!”

Prayer: “Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy name; through Jesus Christ, amen.”

(*Treasury of Daily Prayer*, “Prayer for Purity”, pg. 1321)

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, January 14, 2022

Read Proverbs 6:20-35

Faithfulness

There is nothing more devastating in a committed relationship than unfaithfulness. It is destructive for everyone involved, whether they commit or perpetrate the sin. In the case of marital unfaithfulness, as in this passage, the consequences are dire: loss of wealth, disease, dishonor, and complete destruction. This is why the Proverbs urge us to follow the way of Wisdom which is pictured as a faithful woman who leads and guides and shows the way. This passage plays on both the literal and metaphorical levels. Proverbs tells us of the safety and comfort in following the way of Wisdom and contrasts it with the foolishness and danger of adultery. Surely on the one hand he is teaching us not to commit adultery, but even more he is showing us how foolish it is to be unfaithful to the Wisdom we know to be true.

Throughout the Old Testament, the image of marriage and adultery is used over and over to picture the relationship of God and His people and Israel's constant turning away towards false gods. God guides them in His perfect Wisdom in safety and love, and they turn away from Him toward some other "more attractive" god. In doing so, they call down destruction upon themselves and ruin themselves over and over again. This is the constant refrain of Israel's life and so often in our lives. We turn away from what God would have us do and follow after some foolish path that we deem more attractive in the moment. We disease and dishonor ourselves with sin, and it is no one's fault but our own. Yet God shows that His love is greater than our sins. In His perfect wisdom, He sent us Jesus who was faithful even unto death so that we might be freed from our unrighteousness and unfaithfulness and be brought back into relationship with Him.

Prayer: Good Father, we thank You for Your wise commands and righteous wisdom. Though we so often are unfaithful to Your Law, You have washed us clean in the blood of Your Son, the Bridegroom Who is ever faithful to His Bride, the Church. Keep us firm in this faith now and forever. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, January 15, 2022

Read Proverbs 7:1-15

Adultery and Wisdom

Looking from the window through the lattice, we see a sight of the abomination of adultery and folly between the young man and the forbidden woman—a senseless man who should be a loyal husband to a wife. And a prostitute who should be with a husband. The proverbial message here is to a son. Warning of the abominations of adultery, **“to keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words”** (v. 5). What do we make of this teaching?

Adultery betrays God and godly marriage. The first and sixth commandments ring the ears, **“You shall have no other gods before me”** (Exodus 20:3). *“What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”* When godly marriage is not honored and forsaken in adultery, you rebel against God’s Word, **“You shall not commit adultery”** (Exodus 20:14). *“What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may lead a chaste and decent life in words and deeds, and each love and honor his spouse.”* When this chaste and decent life lacks honor for spouse, fear and love for God are ignored and rejected. Our sinful thoughts and actions idolize the creature rather than the Creator.

Israel is as a bride to a Yahweh GOD their husband. Israel sinned by worshipping false gods of wood and stone, betraying her husband. Idolatrous adultery toward GOD (Ezekiel 23:37; Mark 8:38). Yet, God is the loving husband of Israel (Isaiah 54:5; 61:10; 62:5) who promises mercy and compassion toward His bride. Messiah Jesus is our sacrificial Lamb and husband to His Church (Ephesians 5:23; Revelation 21:9).

A Christian is born anew of the Spirit through Baptism into Christ. Through that called faith given from GOD, we should listen and respond appropriately to His Word as a wife to a husband. We should keep GOD’s commands and instructions, His **“law (תּוֹרָה—torah) as the apple of your eye”** (v. 2). We see Christ crucified and risen for us through that faith alone and respond to His perfect instruction that once condemned us. Jesus keeps GOD’s perfect Law for you. We Christians, therefore, delight in GOD as He delights in us. We delight in His Word and commands as Christ lives in us and is blameless for us.

Here and now, we saints struggle with sin and temptation to sin. Lord have mercy! With man and without faith, it is impossible to keep God’s righteous Law and instruction, but with God in Christ crucified and risen for you and your salvation, all things are possible as we delight in His excellent Word of Law and Gospel.

Prayer – Lord Jesus. Lead us away from temptations of idolatry and adultery. Thank You for being perfect for us and loving Your people to death on a cross for the forgiveness of our sins. For You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pre-seminary Student Nathan Tritch

Monday, January 17, 2022

Read Proverbs 7:16-27 (esp. 25-27)

I Know a Guy...

You have certainly had an experience when you are talking to someone else, and he is telling an incredibly detailed story. He wants to know your opinion for...a friend. The story starts out, "I know a guy who..." But it only takes about three sentences and you know that there isn't some other guy. The story is about him.

That's the feeling that I get in today's reading. Solomon...knows a guy. Solomon is rightly understood to be a man of surpassing wisdom. This doesn't mean that he always followed this wisdom. He is constantly sharing wisdom on relationships and (in today's reading) the destructive nature of unfaithfulness. This is all coming from a man who could have had a wedding anniversary on every day of the year.

Solomon...knows a guy. This makes his statement all the more powerful, **"many a victim has she (adultery) laid low, and her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death."** That's some strong language from someone who knows. Solomon's mother was Bathsheba. Deceit and death run deep through the story of David's taking of Bathsheba for himself, even if Solomon came along later. The desire for immediate physical gratification often spins a web that can entangle and tear down marriages, families, friendships, and careers. The impression that Solomon gives is that he has learned this not just through stories, but through experience...repeatedly.

We are wise to heed his advice and avoid even the slightest temptation that would promise the kind of fulfillment that God reserves for the marriage of husband and wife. Yet when we fall, whether in thought, word, or deed, our hope is the fact that...we know a guy. One who never fell, never was unfaithful, never ceases to forgive even when we choose the destructive path – no matter what momentary sin we choose over the intended goodness He desires for us.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, turn me away from any pull toward momentary gratification that would damage my relationships with my spouse, my children, my friends, or worst of all, with You. Grant me grace, and if I fall, in Your patient mercy, forgive and restore me. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, January 18, 2022

Read Proverbs 8:1-18

How I Want to Be Wise!

In Proverbs King Solomon contrasts “wisdom” with “fools (or foolishness)”. Wisdom is the fear of God while fools think more of themselves than anything else.

How I want to be wise! I long for the constant love of God - in my life and in my actions. But wait, I know that I keep seeing selfishness in my life; I keep wanting my own way, despising that of others. Temper tantrums! Greed! Hurting others for my conveniences! Yes, I fail to find wisdom - on my own.

There is an answer! God has promised me to live in me, that His presence in me covers my sin, drives those desires out of me. Oh, I still fall, I still hurt Him (and drive myself to secret tears), but He has paid the price. Jesus is the human (and God!) essence of wisdom. He lived and died for me. Yes, He died for all, but to me, the importance is that He died and rose for me. That He now lives in me, having brought me to Himself in baptism!

Jesus teaches me with His Words, with the Bible. I am not left to seek truth on my own. He is the truth, and He teaches me. I see Him in the stories in the Bible, I see Him in the truths expressed. And when I see Him, I find my ways changing. He changes me, using His Word. He gives me His wisdom, the wisdom follows being God’s child, that makes me truly Wise!

Prayer: Thank you God for giving me Your salvation, for making me wise. Keep me there, teach me, guard me, and continue to live in and with me. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

Read Proverbs 8:19-36

Eternal Wisdom

In this section of Proverbs 8, the emphasis is on the fact that wisdom is ancient, in place even before the beginning of the world. Powerful imagery reminds us of God's role as the creator of all things: the one who shaped mountains, formed fields, established the heavens, and divided the sea from the dry land. We are reminded that God's wisdom is eternal, it was not created.

But these verses are also about Christ! After all, Christ is God's wisdom, which became incarnate. 1 Corinthians 1:24 calls Christ the wisdom of God. And like the wisdom referenced in Proverbs, Christ was also begotten before the creation of the world. He is eternal, and uncreated.

If the wisdom of God is ultimately Christ, then we would do well to listen to the wisdom of God found in his Word. Verse 33 encourages us to hear God's instruction and take it to heart. And according to verse 35, "whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD". This is also how it is with Christ: because we are in him, we have life and the favor of God. We are declared righteous because of Christ's work.

By hearing and following the wisdom and God, we can better serve our neighbor and live lives that are God-pleasing. But even as we seek to apply God's wisdom in our lives, we remind ourselves that we will not do so perfectly. It is here that Christ's righteousness washes us of our sin. We can be confident that Christ, the wisdom of God, acts on our behalf to save us. How good it is to know that Christ is eternal and always there for us.

Prayer: God, grant me wisdom and faith in the one you have sent, your only Son Jesus Christ. Remind me of the forgiveness that I have in Jesus. By your Holy Spirit, allow me to apply your wisdom and commands to my life, so that I may serve others and follow you.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Reading: Proverbs 9:1-18

The Corn Palace

When I was younger, my family went on a road trip to South Dakota. If anyone has been to South Dakota, you'll probably agree with me that there just isn't really much there. Sure, there are great locations like Mt. Rushmore and the Badlands, but in between the landscape is rather dull. Well, while we were driving through this dull landscape, we kept seeing signs for this amazing stop in Mitchell, SD called The Corn Palace. Intrigued, we decided to stop there and add a little flavor to the trip. Upon arriving, The Corn Palace did not disappoint. It was a huge structure with massive, beautiful murals all along the walls made entirely out of corn. It was beautiful! Filled with excitement, we decided to go inside while filming so we could catch our reactions on camera. I can still hear my dad's voice now: "Here we go! We're walking in! And The Corn Palace...is!... a gym. The Corn Palace is a gym". The inside of the famous Corn Palace which was advertised for miles was a simple gymnasium. This structure that looked so beautiful, so majestic on the outside was utterly disappointing on the inside.

I'm telling you this story because this is the kind of situation that Solomon is warning his readers about in this passage. In Proverbs 9, Solomon presents two women that represent two different paths of life: Wisdom and Folly. They both look rather enticing. Both are built on "the highest places of the town" meaning they're both perceived as important. Both are offering a feast. Both are saying "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" But though they appear to be the same, one is fulfilling and good while the other is just a hollow Corn Palace. The way of Wisdom uses hand-mixed wine and hand-made bread while the way of Folly uses stolen water and bread. The way of Wisdom allows you to "leave your simple ways and live" while the way of Folly is populated with the dead who are already in the "depths of Sheol". The way of Wisdom is clearly good, and the way of Folly is clearly bad.

But how do we tell the difference? How do we distinguish between wisdom and folly? Solomon provides an answer. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight". Trust in God! Follow the commandments of the one who holds all wisdom, and you yourself will know that same wisdom! Follow Jesus and you can't go wrong! Trust in Him and He will lead you out of the Corn Palace and into His eternal palace of glory.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your perfect Law. Help me to follow your commandments and stay on the path of Wisdom which leads to life. Though I am surrounded by false beauty and hollow palaces, strengthen me to remain focused on your unwavering, pure holiness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, January 21, 2022

Read Proverbs 10:1-16

The Righteous Person

Chapter 10 of Proverbs speaks much of the righteous person and the wicked person. Solomon is careful not to give us false hope about how the righteous prosper and the wicked fail. We know that more often, the wicked are those who have material wealth and the righteous find themselves living lean. Yet he is clear that the righteous will have riches: honor, blessing, the favor of God. The righteous are those who trust in the wise Son who brings joy to the Father.

Solomon is not merely talking about those who do the right thing, he is talking about those who are faithful to God. These are the ones who will be saved from death. The wages of the righteous person bring him to life. The Proverbs teach us practical wisdom, but there is also a constant undercurrent of the beginning of wisdom: knowledge of God. With this knowledge, we truly are wise, we truly are His righteous people.

This goes hand-in-hand with right living. When Christ controls our lives, we don't seek unjust gain or deceitful practices. Instead, we act with honesty and integrity. We don't usually grow rich, but we labor honestly, and God sees to it that we do not starve. The true riches that we labor for are blessings stored up for us in heaven. Even still, we are blessed in this life with some possessions, and we know to use them for our security and for the help of our neighbors. We use worldly wealth for heavenly purposes and are brought to life. The unrighteous use their wealth for sin and are brought even closer to death. Above all, the life of the righteous is characterized by this pure piece of Gospel wisdom: "love covers all sins." God's love is the source of all our righteousness, all our wisdom, and all our wealth both worldly and heavenly. Only through His love, shown in Christ, do we have anything. And with God's love, we have everything.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have made us Your righteous people. Guide us in wisdom so that we can live lives pleasing to You in everything we do. Cover our sins with Your perfect love and bring us on the way to life everlasting. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, January 22, 2022

Read [Proverbs 10:17-32](#)

“The Value of Wisdom”

The “[Darwin Awards](#)” chronicle what might be considered the opposite of Wisdom. This collection of stories tells of people who have improved the human gene pool by acting so stupidly their actions cause their own death. There’s the one about the investigation of a car accident, where the difficulty was trying to explain why there was a long streak of tire tracks on the road in a line that pointed to the wreckage, imbedded in the side of a hill in the desert. Turns out, the brilliant inventor had attached rocket motors to his car to give him more acceleration. They did, but could not be shut off, leading to him burning out his brakes on the road (creating the skid marks) and launching him into the hillside.

People love to hear stories of other’s great stupidity. We feel better in our own intelligence, knowing that “I’d never do that.” But actually, common sense isn’t that common. We might have advanced degrees through colleges and universities (or the school of hard knocks), but we still find ourselves frequently doing things we know better than.

Beginning with chapter 10 and going into chapter 22, Solomon shares the benefit of his wisdom. Oftentimes in pairs of “the Righteous vs. the Wicked”, he teaches us great truths. Taken as wise sayings by the entire world, they often surpass the smartest “self-help” books or flashy seminars put on by slick consultants and bought by millions. And, from a practical perspective, many of his teachings will make you a better salesman, construction foreman, or teacher.

But that’s just the first level of understanding. They also teach moral choices: “**The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth.**” Looked at this way, that means, “look into the hearts of those you choose as friends – one with an evil heart cannot be a friend”. But this lesson still wastes the true Wisdom of these proverbs.

These are not merely self-improvement lessons. The wisdom that comes from truly knowing God’s love in your heart and mind transforms your entire person into a child of God. And, as God’s child, living in His love and wisdom, you are eternal: “**When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever.**” When you share God’s wisdom, “**The lips of the righteous feed many**”. And we have a source of constant optimism, “**The hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.**”

Prayer: Lord of Wisdom, draw me to You by Your Spirit and make me heed Your instruction. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, January 24, 2022

Read Proverbs 11:1-15 (esp. v.3)

Integrity

Consider for a moment, more than anyone else, who do I trust? Naturally, the first answer of the Christian would be Jesus, but beyond Him, who do you trust?

This is a different question than, who do you love? Often times, these overlap. In marriage, love and trust are both essential. But when we consider love, we immediately begin to think of family. When we think of trust the list may expand (or shrink), but the criteria is different. Trust is fundamentally about integrity, someone who can be counted on to do the right thing. Even when the right thing is hard to do. Even when no one is looking or will notice. Perhaps even more so, when everyone is looking and encouraging you to do the wrong thing.

In this world, where businesses may get ahead by tipping the balance in their own favor (v.1), and crookedness is abundant (v. 3), integrity is not easy. Doing the right thing, when doing the wrong thing would make life easier (at least in the moment), is hard. So, here, as in all things, we look to Christ, the One who is wisdom in human flesh. Jesus could have had it much easier in life. By just, occasionally, using His divine power to get Himself out of some difficult circumstances, think how much easier He would have had it. But He would not have been the Savior. So, He faithfully did the right thing, including only using His divine authority for the benefit of others and willingly sacrificing Himself.

As people forgiven and redeemed in Christ, we are made righteous to live lives of integrity, knowing it will be hard sometimes. Many times. When you are tempted to take the easy path, instead of the way of truth as revealed in God's Word, turn to Your Lord in prayer. You know that You can trust in Him above all others. Seek His wisdom to follow Him as a man or woman of integrity.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, bless me and direct my days and my deeds in Your peace. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, January 25, 2022

Read Proverbs 11:16-31

Consequences

There are consequences in Life! My relationship with God is foremost; it is good to be right with Him - for my time after death but also for my time here on earth, right now. God works the world in my favor when I am His.

There are consequences for my life here on earth. Sin, in its glory is basically a promise - a false promise, but it is so attractive to me. Sin points me to myself before others, to me first, always, and only. But that opposes God, and His consequences never fail. Seeking my personal interest brings only a loss of everything. "For what does it value a man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul." And that becomes apparent in the emptiness of life without God or even those neighbors my selfishness preyed upon.

So, I want God's help - to keep my eyes upon Him. When like Him I support others, when I share what I have to the benefit of others, then I am living in God's way. Then what I have is what I need, and He gives more for me to share! I want this kind of consequence.

I find that as I focus on God, I see others better and become one of God's angels (His messengers) bringing to others the light of His love and concern for others by the very way God shines through my actions. It is good to see consequences that I like and appreciate!

Prayer: Oh, Father, I know my failings. Please keep my attention on You and show Your love through the consequences You bring in my life. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, January 26, 2022

Read Proverbs 12:1-14

Humble Righteousness

In these verses, righteousness and wickedness are contrasted. The first part of verse 1 actually sets the tone for all these verses: “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge”. In other words, the person who is humble, and acknowledges they need instruction, is the one who has true wisdom. We probably all know someone who we think of as a “know-it-all”. They think they have all of life figured out, and they’re not afraid to tell you about it! Sometimes, that person might even be us. We think we know just what to do, that we know how the world *really* works.

But these verses remind us that humility is essential if we are to possess the true wisdom of God. We start by acknowledging the facts: that we’re limited, sinful human beings. It’s not hard to arrive at that realization—we see the effects of our sin all the time. Once we come face to face with our limitations, we start to see that wisdom comes only with discipline and instruction.

In these verses, we’re given examples of how the wisdom of the righteous, who follow God, is different than that of the wicked. The way of the wicked can be summed up as selfishness—the wicked do things only for their own gain. On the other hand, the righteous consider how their actions might affect their relationship with God and other people. So the righteous wife cares for her husband, and the righteous husband cares for his wife. The righteous person is merciful instead of cruel. All of this ultimately stems from the realization that the grace we receive from God is undeserved, and is thus a model for how we might live. Thanks be to God for his humbling grace!

Prayer: Lord, I am far from perfect. By your word, instruct and discipline me. But also reveal to me your merciful grace, which shows to me the path of righteousness and eternal life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Thursday, January 27, 2022
Reading: Proverbs 12:15-28

“In the path of righteousness is life”

In Solomon’s ongoing attempt to express the importance of living in wisdom (faith) as opposed to foolishness (ungodliness), he takes a rather simple, yet effective literary approach in this passage. He seems to be demonstrating two important things to his audience: 1) what it means to be foolish and 2) what being foolish does to a person. These are important distinctions for us to remember today because whether we recognize it or not, foolishness (ungodliness) is all around us. If we don’t know how to recognize it, we may wind up engaging in it ourselves! And with this foolishness comes consequences.

So first, you should ask, “Well what does it mean to be foolish? What does that look like?” In verses 15-20, Solomon provides some examples. Ungodly people are self-righteous, quick to anger, dishonest, insulting, and deceitful in their thoughts and intentions. Now, if you’re anything like me, you’re probably thinking, “Uh oh. I am some, if not all of these things sometimes.” Of course, we are! We are all victims of our sinful nature and the weight of original sin. But that doesn’t mean this sin should be embraced!

If you’re still anything like me, you might think, “Well, what’s the big deal? I know I’m sinful, and I can’t help it, so why not just embrace it? What’s the harm in being unrighteous, really?” Solomon has an answer for these questions, too in verse 21. He says, “No ill befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble”. He then continues on in verses 22-27, to demonstrate what kind of trouble the ungodly find themselves in. He says that the unrighteous are an abomination to God! Not only this, but they’re forced into undesirable labor, weighed down by anxiety, disliked by their neighbors, and find themselves hungry and alone. Being ungodly and living in sin is dangerous! However, it’s not just dangerous ethically, but also spiritually.

As the final mic-drop of the passage, Solomon states “In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway, there is no death”. By extension, though he doesn’t say it, Solomon is making something very clearly: in the path of unrighteousness is death, and in its pathway, there is no life. Thanks be to God that we have a Savior, Jesus Christ, who forgives us of our sins and saves us from our perpetually unrighteous lives! Through Jesus, though we are unrighteous, we are called righteous. Thanks be to God for Jesus and thanks be to Jesus for covering us with His righteousness!

Prayer: “We implore You, O Lord, in Your kindness to show us Your great mercy that we may be set free from our sins and rescued from the punishments that we rightfully deserve; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.” *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, “Prayer for deliverance from sin,” pg. 1320.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, January 28, 2022

Read Proverbs 13:1-13

Pretending to be Rich

This section of Proverbs is filled with some of the book's shorter sayings. For today, we will look closely at just one in verse 7. We see the poor man pretending to be rich and the rich man pretending to be poor. As with so many of the sayings in this work, there is both an everyday sense and a more spiritual sense. On the one hand, we are all probably aware of people who drive around nice cars and fill their homes with expensive foods and luxury items yet are barely scraping by financially, struggling to make their payments. On the other hand, we know folks who live very modestly although they have exceptional wealth. The appearance does not match the reality. This is a useful piece of wisdom to pass on to our children that looks can be deceiving and actually may be more often than they are not.

At the same time, we can also see in this simple saying a deeper spiritual wisdom. Take the example of our Lord. He appeared in flesh as a humble man. He lived a quiet life before becoming a meek and lowly teacher who was eventually subjected to death. Yet, the truth is that He was God incarnate, not merely a humble man. He was the Lord of all power and might to whom even death is subject. At the resurrection, we saw the truth that Jesus who had appeared as the servant of all actually was the Lord of all and sin, death, and evil which seem to run our world are actually powerless. As Christians, we appear poor in the sight of the world because we aim our efforts at loving our neighbor and bringing glory to God rather than advancing ourselves and storing up goods for this life. Yet, we know that in Christ, we have riches far greater than even we can comprehend.

Prayer: Lord of all, You have made us rich in Christ. Daily enrich our lives to better know You who became poor so that we might be rich in life and righteousness. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, January 29, 2022

Read Proverbs 13:14-25

“Life vs. Death”

As Case mentioned yesterday, this section of Proverbs is made up of many small pearls of great wisdom. Verse 14 by itself describes God’s entire Gospel plan for our life on earth: **“The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.”**

God is all about Life. In the Garden of Eden, He breathed life into Adam’s formerly lifeless body. He filled the entire Garden with life – from ladybugs to Mastodons to whales. If you stroll through the Jewel Box, or the Botanical Gardens (in a couple months!), you’re amazed at the variety and beauty of the life He’s made. And, He prepared the Tree of Life to bless His entire creation with this life - eternally. But sin destroyed that plan, brought Death onto the scene, and God was forced to remove the Tree of Life from our grasp.

Death brought murder to Adam and Eve’s family. Animals battled each other and Man for food. Plants made the ground thorny, turning growing food into a burden. Today, war, disease, injustice, and death try to choke Life out of our world. But God remains all about Life.

He teaches the wise, and the wise teach others using His wisdom, taken from the Vine that grows from His living waters. Like a fountain, His gift of Life bubbles up again and again in the bright, shiny eyes of a newborn. Farmers nurture Life in their fields, sustaining God’s creation with abundance. Wives and husbands are united in marriage, teaching their kids with the wisdom from God’s fountain. Doctors, first responders, and soldiers use their God-given wisdom and expertise to protect and save lives.

But God’s plan to give us even Life Eternal has never died. He gave us Jesus to defeat sin and death. Now, when we taste the fruit of the Tree of Life in heaven, we will live in His righteousness forever. Through the waters of our baptism, He wrote our name in the Book of Life, from which He will call us into paradise with Him on the Last Day. And, through the Word and Bread of Life, He feeds and nurtures our faith every Sunday.

Death may try to claim victory over Life. It may try to draw us into its enchanting snares, but God is all about Life. His fountain of life overflows through His Word and Church into our lives, drowning out death forever.

Prayer: Lord of Life, make your Word nurture eternal life in me and help me to share Your Wisdom, that others may turn away from the snares of death. In Jesus’ Holy Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, January 31, 2022

Read Proverbs 14:1-18

A Good Double Standard

You have probably been taught that to have a double standard is bad. In many cases, that's true. It is a very bad idea to have one set of rules for your son and a different set of rules for your daughter. As a teacher, it would be a bad idea to have one set of rules for some kids, but another set for the others. Our sense of justice (which is a gift from God) tells us that double standards can create real problems.

On other occasions, double standards make perfect sense. For instance, I trust my wife more than I trust other people. That doesn't mean that other people are completely untrustworthy, from our relationship, I know that I can trust her to always seek what's best for me.

Why am I talking about this? Proverbs 14:15 says, **“the simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.”** The next verse is similar, **“one who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless.”** As I thought about these passages, I was wondering about Jesus's statement that we must become like little children. So, are we to be completely trusting or “wise” and “cautious?”

This is precisely when we need a good double standard. We are to be like little children in trusting our Lord. We CAN and SHOULD believe everything He says. After all, we know that He not only is always seeking what is best for us, He also provides all good things for bodily life, for forgiveness through Christ, for faith by the working of the Holy Spirit. We should listen and follow Him without question.

But before following other voices, we should be prudent, wise, and cautious. If the direction of others leads us in following Christ and loving our neighbor, we are wise to follow. Yet, we first need to judge their words on the basis of Scripture. For at times, even with good intentions, sinful people can lead us down destructive paths. This is a good and godly double standard: When it comes to God's Word – Trust and Follow. When it comes to everyone else – Trust, but Verify.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, help me to trust in You completely. Lead me also to be wise and cautious in heeding the words of others. In Your name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

Read Proverbs 14:19-35

Trusting Him, Not Ourselves

Thank You God for making me yours. I was lost but I'm saved. Still, that is a onetime occurrence, even it occurred long before I can remember. I know, in a way, what not to be like, but what now? How do I live? My thinking is corrupted by sin, tempted constantly by selfish desire, - how do I decide to live?

Now, He didn't give me the 10 commandments to force me to choose Him - He knows none of us can truly do that. Look sin dominates all people. No, He gave me the Commandments so I would have an open guide to living God's way. I do know how to live, "just" keep the commandments. Only even that is hard to always be sure about.

So, God gave me the Bible, all parts of it, to illustrate and teach me about Salvation but also to guide/teach me to live a saved life, to see and understand His will in my life.

The book of proverbs gives short intense lessons on aspects of life. They show the differences between the results of living God's ways and the results of sin. Sin leads to trouble in this life and death eternally, but God's ways are good. God's ways involve trusting Him, not ourselves; involve putting ourselves out for others; involve being a right person (righteousness). Only God could forgive me - and only God could teach/cause me to forgive others! Always right, God pushes that rightness into my life!

Prayer: Thank you God for making me Yours, not only by forgiving me but also by living in me, changing me, and showing goodness in my life. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, February 2, 2022

Read Proverbs 15:1-16

Double-Edged Tongues

Throughout these verses, there is a lot of mention of organs related to speaking—lips, tongue, mouth. The caution here is that all of these organs can be a double-edged sword. As verse one says: “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” While we can use our lips, tongues, and mouths to speak good words and build others up, we can also use them in anger, to destroy.

Our society understands the power of our words as well—but that doesn’t mean it gives us the good advice the Bible does! Our society rewards the people who speak the loudest, who shout over others, who cut people down with their words. It’s pretty much the opposite of what these verses in Proverbs say!

It can be hard to use our words in God-pleasing ways—especially when we live in such a frustrating world full of anger and sin. Maybe we even feel justified when we use our words to decry the sin around us—but is that really what God calls us to in these verses?

Instead, we are counseled to use gentle words. To turn away wrath with a soft tongue, to give godly wisdom instead of folly when we are asked for advice. We also use our lips to pray to our Lord—and “the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.” So as you take these verses to heart, let’s use our lips to pray, praise, and build up, rather than for wrath.

Prayer: Dear Lord, keep my lips, tongue, and mouth upright. Keep me from speaking in anger or condemnation—rather let me praise you and offer words of godly wisdom and forgiveness for others. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Thursday, February 3, 2022
Reading: Proverbs 15:17-33

God Answers

Why do bad things happen to good people? If there really is a loving and caring God, how could He allow my loved-one to die? Why is there so much pain in the world, and why doesn't God do anything about it?

Have you ever been asked a question that you couldn't answer? What did you do? What did you say in reply? Did you try your best to reason it out and give a logical, flushed-out answer? I know I have. And if you're like me, pretty soon it isn't really about giving an answer to the other person. Soon, you start asking and questioning, "why?" You have your own questions and doubts about God that need to be addressed. You need answers. And if you're still like me, you don't really get these answers. And that can be unsatisfying.

Well, in the Lutheran church, we believe that we have the privilege of not knowing everything. In fact, we aren't **meant** to know everything. Instead, we are supposed to trust and rely on God, the omniscient Creator. Luther described the Christian life as being a three-part cycle: prayer (*oratio*), meditation on Scripture (*meditatio*), and trial (*tentatio*). We pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us in our lives, meditate on the Scriptures through which God answers our prayers, and eventually through the course of life, we run into trial. We have doubts and ask questions. The appropriate response to these questions, then, is to go back and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us in our asking. God has already answered all of our questions in His Word: the Holy Scriptures! We just need to be wise enough to turn to them.

In Proverbs 15:28-29, Solomon says, "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous". So when you're faced with impossible questions, how should you answer? According to Solomon, only a wicked person makes things up. So, sometimes the right answer is to admit that you don't have one. When faced with trials that make you ask, "why?" sometimes the appropriate response is simply, "I don't know... But I'll tell you what I do know. God is real, and He knows everything. And He is for you. So much so, that though I can't answer you now, God **always** hears the prayer of the righteous. Rely on Him, and you will have all that you need."

Prayer: "Almighty God, You have promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in Your Son's name. Mercifully incline Your ears to us who have now made our prayers and supplications to You, and grant that those things that we have faithfully asked according to Your will we may receive to meet our need and bring glory to You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."
(*Treasury of Daily Prayer*, "Prayer for an Answer to Prayer," 1322.)

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, February 4, 2022

Read Proverbs 16:1-17

Plans

We all know that things don't always go according to plan. Often, they go exactly contrary to what we wanted. We are free to make plans, but the first verse of this passage reminds us that our plans are ultimately subject to God's plan. We may think a way is pure and right, but God is the final judge. So as Christians we entrust everything we do to God for final approval. If He decides our plans are good, He makes them succeed. If not, we thank Him that He has made our plans fail because He knows better than us that they were not good.

Nowhere is this proverb more apt than in the case of our salvation. Most every human would come up with a plan that pays for sin by doing more and more good works. It makes sense that we got ourselves into this mess and it's only fair that we get ourselves out. We see in so many religions in this world the idea that only by our good actions can we achieve our spiritual goals. This is the way that seems pure in the eyes of a man. But thanks be to God that He had a better plan than that. "**By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for.**" God has chosen to destroy our plans of self-centered works righteousness and instead put in action a plan to atone for sin based on His steadfast love and His faithfulness. The words translated "steadfast love" and "faithfulness" are somewhat special terms in the Old Testament and it's hard to capture their whole sense with any one word in another language. For example, when the Greeks translated the OT into their language, they translated these words with Greek words meaning "grace" and "truth." Grace and truth are God's answer to iniquity and sin. Grace and truth were shown to us nowhere more clearly than in Jesus. John tells us that Jesus was "**full of grace and truth.**" Ultimately, God's plan for iniquity was Jesus. No matter what plans we might have decided were better in our human reason, God has destroyed those plans and done what He knows is better. Thanks be to God that He does His will and not ours.

Prayer: Merciful Judge, You weigh our plans for our own good. We thank You for the good judgment You give to us and even more for changing our plans in favor of Your perfect purposes. Teach us to trust in You to do all things according to Your will for our good. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, February 5, 2022

Read [Proverbs 16:18-33](#)

“Immanuel”

When your first child is born, you suddenly realize, “There’s no instruction manual!” What do you do when stuff comes out of his nose? How do you know when it’s time to cut her hair for the first time? When you buy your first car, you quickly learn that the operator’s manual doesn’t cover everything, either. What should you do when the weather stripping comes off the door when you try to open it after a snowstorm and it’s frozen solid? (Don’t ask why I bring that up!)

But Proverbs proves that God is Immanuel – “God with Us”. He not only made everything, He wrote the Book! How many times have you heard the proverb, “**Pride goes before destruction**” (v18 from our reading)? You and I have probably learned that lesson dozens of times in our lives (of course, only by witnessing it in others). But still we have to learn it again and again. No, God knows us like He’s one of us. Proverbs shows that He understands what makes us tick, our preferred paths toward destruction, and exactly how our minds follow our hearts and together, lead us into trouble.

We actually love the concept of learning by “trial and error”. We like to make mistakes – we enjoy having to start over again from scratch, doing it the way we knew we should have, all along. We can’t imagine any other way. But imagine Adam and Eve before the Fall – they simply followed God’s instructions and together, the two of them were able to manage God’s entire Creation! That is, until the Fall.

Now, after the Fall, we need God’s instruction on a regular basis. We need to hear His words, again and again, to know what He thinks about things like, “**A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.**” On our own, we try, and we make errors. But filled with God’s Word and His Spirit, we avoid some of the mistakes we would choose. We become better people, and are better neighbors.

Our life experience with this – learning from and following God’s Word – is sadly hit or miss. Sometimes, by doing His will, we perform miracles; other times, we fall back on our own trial and error, and fail. But God is Immanuel. He knows us, He loves us, and He became One of us to save us. And so, as we grow older, because He makes us righteous through Jesus, we can appreciate hearing, “**Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.**”

Prayer: Oh, Immanuel, praise be to You for being the God Who knows me. Teach me Your will through Your Word and instruct my heart and mind in Your ways. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, February 7, 2022

Read Proverbs 17:1-14 (esp v 9)

Bury It

Think back on a time when you have been harmed by someone that you trust. Many things about such an incident make it painful – the violation itself, the fact that you trusted the person, but one more factor is your memory.

Many times when we are harmed by another we turn over the offense in our minds again and again. We will repeat the details of the harm to anyone who will listen. Such repetition can be paralyzing, but it is all that much worse when the offending party has apologized, and we still can't "let it go."

Solomon's direction to us in this matter is instructive: **"Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends."** In 1 Peter 4:8, similar instruction is given to us, **"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."**

When the two passages are held together, they are the most helpful to us. The truth of the matter is that as sinful people, we will harm one another. It should not be so, but it will be. When we harm another, we should be quick to confess our sin and be patient with those we've injured. When we are the offended party, the love of Christ compels us to love and forgive. Unlike our Lord, we cannot forgive and forget. So, Solomon and Peter tell us to cover it. Bury the harm in the forgiving love of Christ. You will still remember where it is buried, but in the strength of Christ's love, you'll resist the temptation to dig it up and instead remember Christ who has buried your sin.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, when I am harmed, let me be quick to forgive and slow to rehearse past hurts. Instead, help me rehearse the wonder of Your forgiving love for me. In Your name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

Read Proverbs 17:15-28

Serving in His World

I am saved! God has established me as His child. Now my life is easy and always seeing and doing good? Wait, I'm right with God but my life still sees sin! My body, my emotions, my "instinctive" thoughts are not God pleasing! Help.

He does help me. Jesus abides in/with me. He is there, guiding me - making my guilt come forth as I keep sinning. He is with me, showing me the truths of His Word in the Bible. I need Him and I need His Word.

My brother, my friend, other people around me, those pesky neighbors that I want to take advantage of, God keeps guiding me to be an advantage to them! I can be there for them, I can fill their needs - as God keeps filling my needs, even my wants. That is the opposite of my natural selfishness.

God puts me in charge of parts of His world. A father being fair to his children while teaching about God for them as well as himself. A manager accepting his responsibility for poor performance. A leader encouraging and promoting those with her. A wife building her husband up. A child practicing obedience and appreciation.

God is the power bringing those blessings to others through me. God does it and I marvel at what He does. His Word tells me, and I see Him doing it. Thank you!

Prayer: Thank You my Lord for what you do - not only for me in salvation but in changing my life, even if it seems strange to me. Thank you again. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, February 9, 2022

Read Proverbs 18:1-12

A Strong Tower

In these verses we again see that our lips and mouths are the focus of much advice—we are warned of the damage our words can do. We can probably all remember a time where we wish we could take back something we've said. But once it leaves our lips, the damage is done. We can't undo our words or their effects. And often we're on the receiving end of cruel words, vicious slander, or outright lies.

But another focus of these verses is the concept of justice—we are told not to favor the wicked, but to act justly. We might not think of ourselves as people who have to make those decisions, if we aren't judges or law enforcement. But even in our daily lives, we judge between right and wrong, between doing wicked things and righteous things. And our hearts cry out for this justice.

Finally, we get some Gospel, and relief. Verse 10: **“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.”** Where are we to seek refuge when we've sinned, or been sinned against? The Lord. He is the one who restores us, and assures us of our identity in him. Who provides absolution in the words of a pastor, or comfort in his Holy Word. So cling to the Lord, for he is your strong tower!

Prayer: Lord, keep watch over my tongue. Keep me from saying things I regret, and when I do, grant me mercy. Protect me from cruel words, and comfort me with sweet ones from your own Word. In Christ, the Word made Flesh, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Thursday, February 10, 2022
Read: Proverbs 18:13-24

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

Friendship is a fickle thing. Over the years, I've "lost" several friends for numerous reasons. But whether it be moving away or visceral disagreement, I'm always left with the same bitter taste in my mouth and the same empty feeling in my heart. No matter who or why, dissolving a friendship is never easy or enjoyable. Yet even though having friends is hard and risky, we all want friends! No one wants to be lonely, so we take the risk. Friendship is a fickle thing.

Well this concept seems to be what Solomon is commenting on in this passage. In verses 1-23, he seems to be saying, "This is how you make friends and here are some things you should avoid". Why is this important? Because "whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment" (18:1). This is a big deal! So big of a deal, in fact, that Solomon takes 23 verses to talk about it! Friends are incredibly important to living the Christian life.

But then in verse 24, he throws a curveball. He says, "**A man of many companions may come to ruin**". What?! He spends 23 verses explaining how friends are important to have in order to avoid "foolishness" but then at the way end says, "yeah, but it still might not work"! Friendship is a fickle thing! So what can we do?

Solomon has an answer. He says, "**even though friendship is fickle, and friends come and go, there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother**" (18:24). To Solomon, that friend was God and His promises. To us, that friend is Jesus, God Himself who came to earth and fulfilled those promises.

I was a camp counselor in Minnesota, and during my time there we would sing a song that I think we should reflect on. It goes, "Jesus is our friend, He's the very best we know. He died for our sins, and made us as white as snow. So live your life for Him, because He gave His life for you! So I thank You, I thank You God, for Jesus my friend. I thank You, I thank You God, for Jesus my friend, with me to stay." I encourage you to continually thank God for Jesus; your Savior, your Lord, and your unwavering friend.

Prayer: "Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness. Take it to the Lord in prayer."

- *What a Friend We Have in Jesus (LSB 770)*

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, February 11, 2022

Read Proverbs 19:1-14

Integrity and Wealth

Often, we tell young children "honesty is the best policy." We then proceed to turn them loose in the world and tell them that they need to get a good job and make a lot of money. Unfortunately, in many of the ways that we and our society at large deem most important, honesty is the very worst policy! No one ever got far ahead by being honest with the IRS or their boss or their bank.

Obviously, we know that honesty is not at fault here, but it can be hard to say honestly to ourselves that our whole society and economy and way of life is completely shot through with sin. We would much rather find some kind of compromise between greed and integrity. We are happy to do the right thing as long as it doesn't cost us too dearly. But the Scriptures do not relent. It is clear that wealth is a fine thing, but that honesty is better in every case.

The difficulty is that we live primarily through our bodies in this earthly world, giving short shrift to our souls and eternal matters. It is hard for us to prioritize morality to anything else as long as we live in this world. What we must be reminded of again and again by the Scriptures is the importance of spiritual affairs. If we feed our bodies but neglect our souls, we are just as lost as if we ate plenty of food but drank no water. Wealth helps us contribute to the wellbeing of our physical bodies, but wisdom and integrity are virtues that give our souls the wellbeing that God desires for them to have.

The center of our integrity is trust in Jesus. Whenever we see wisdom or prudence or honesty or integrity praised in the book of Proverbs, we can see them as different aspects and different results of faith in Christ. It is better to be poor in an earthly way and have the virtues that come along with faith than to be faithless and rich. All of the Scriptures testify to the fact that our bodily security and earthly riches are nothing more than a stumbling block to us unless we set ourselves first on following Christ. As He Himself says "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you."

Prayer: Lord Almighty, You are the one owner of all things. We thank you for the many earthly blessings You have given to us and our families. Help us to never lose sight of our greatest blessing, faith in Your Son, Jesus. Lead us in all we do to live in accordance with the message of the Gospel.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, February 12, 2022

Read [Proverbs 19:15-29](#)

Our Plans and the Lord's Purposes

“Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.” As we read the Proverbs, we come across many examples of good, common sense. We read some that seem unnecessary, as we say to ourselves, “everyone knows that”. (But then we remember all the times we’ve done the opposite and thank God for the reminder.) But some, like the one above, are just laughable in the odd words used. Who really “sets their heart” on “putting their son to death”?

But then, you run across countless others that just make you think, “That’s deep!” Verse 21 is like this: **“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.”** How true! How often does your vacation go exactly as planned? How about the plans you had for your life when you were 18? How many of us had other plans before COVID came along?

In this proverb, God isn’t telling us to not make plans. No, already in chapter 21 He advises, **“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.”** Making plans is an act of wisdom. Other proverbs tell us to plan using **“wise guidance”** from other’s counsel. Benjamin Franklin wrote a similar proverb, saying, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”

What this proverb is saying is that while it’s wise to plan, many of our plans will come to naught. We can’t predict pandemics, or grades, jobs, or the weather. We don’t know who will say “yes” to becoming our spouse. We can plan, but many of our plans will be forced to change. But the Lord’s purpose will stand. Where our best plan fails, God’s will always prevails.

So you want to know the secret to making our plans always succeed? Just say, “Not my will, but Thine be done”. When our plan is aligned with God’s plan, our plan stands on firm ground. True, we can’t always know God’s will in every circumstance. We can’t know which job God would have us take, which car to buy, even which breakfast cereal we should eat today.

But we know God’s Word. He teaches us to love Him and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And when we follow this teaching, God uses our lives and actions to carry out His will. When we say in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done”, we’re praying that His will is done through me and in me. What a joy, honor, and privilege to be a part of God’s Plan!

Prayer: Lord of the Universe, when I don’t know what to do, what direction to take; turn me to Your Word, that I may know and do Your will. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, February 14, 2022

Read Proverbs 20:1-15

True Love

“Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?” *Proverbs 20:6*

Happy Valentine's Day, everybody! Properly, it would be Saint Valentine's Day.

Tradition says Valentine was a pastor in Rome martyred during the reign of Emperor Claudius II. He was arrested and imprisoned upon being caught marrying Christian couples and otherwise aiding Christians (when giving any aid to Christians was considered a crime). Claudius took a liking to this prisoner — until Valentinus tried to convert the Emperor — whereupon this priest was condemned to death. He was beaten with clubs and stoned; when that didn't finish him, he was beheaded outside the Flaminian Gate.

Valentine's persistent help to marry Christians makes the connection to love, but he probably would have found the use of Cupid (the Roman god of attraction) to be strange when Rome imprisoned and executed Valentine! Still, there is another legend connected to the real man, Valentine.

According to legend, while in prison, Valentine wrote to Christians to encourage them, and at the end of his letters, he'd sign them, “Your Valentine,” and some believe this marks the source of sending cards and letters on that day.

Regardless of the truth of the legend, as we celebrate God's love as shown through the life of Valentine and other martyrs, we find a greater love than that offered by the card and candy stores. You see, Valentine was constantly pointing to the answer to Solomon's question. **“Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?”** Valentine knew and so do we: in Christ! God has given us His Son and has shown us the greatest love. **“Greater love has no one than this – that He lay down His life for His friends”** (John 15:13). This is what Christ, our beloved, has done for us.

As you celebrate, whether married, single, or somewhere in between, know that St. Valentine's Day is for all people, a day to celebrate true love, the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Prayer – Lord Jesus, You have shown us true love. Help us to reflect Your faithful, steadfast love in our marriages, in our families, in our church, and in love toward You. In Your name, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Information adapted from <http://lcmspastor.com/historical/the-love-of-saint-valentine/>

Tuesday, February 15, 2022

Read Proverbs 17:15-28

Serving in His World

God has given us each our strengths. Grace in everything. My life in Christ is a gift from Him. My every ability, achievement, and nature is from Him. So, for success in life, in all things, look to God and His will. And He gives us His will!

We see in His Word, the Bible, that He creates us, forgives us even after we ruined what He gave us, that as He gives us salvation, He stays with us to cause and guide our actions (and thoughts, and results).

And as Proverbs 20:29 tells me, God has given me stages of life, He has given me changes, abilities and qualities that vary as I progress through my life. I was young and strong, willing and eager to challenge experience, to match my hopes with my efforts. I thank God for those experiences for the successes and the failures (which always teach far more than successes).

And now, those qualities have changed, there are others following after, letting their very inexperience drive them to future successes. But I have seen my life change, my hair lose its color, and my past experiences inform and propel me too, ahead as more of a mentor and a guide myself. I continue to succeed and fail, but with the aid of experience, I find that God grants me also to have challenges, to also be one of His servants. It's so good, to see Him using my present self in His ways, just as He used me too in the past! He is good.

Prayer: I thank you my God for loving me enough to give me life experiences appropriate for my age. I thank you for the reminder that You care for me, just as I am. Amen

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

Read Proverbs 21:1-15

Righteousness and Justice—For Others

In these verses we again and again see the contrast between our own sinful tendencies and the ways of God. Haughty eyes and proud hearts are an all-too-common trait, even among us as Christians. At the same time, however, we know what righteousness and uprightness look like. And it begins with humility.

Too often we are obsessed with our status before others. How often do we want to be the smartest, funniest, coolest, or best-looking person in a room? If you're like me, it's unfortunately pretty often. But even worse is when we come before God and try to do the same thing with our good works. We think doing good things will somehow impress God and lead to his favor.

But we already have God's free grace and mercy. We don't need to earn it. This doesn't mean our works are bad, however! As Proverbs 21:3 says, "**To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.**" However, the key is that justice and righteousness are things we do for our neighbor. For others who God has placed in our lives to be blessed by our good works. So, we should always be concerned about how our actions affect our relationship between us and our neighbor! Rather than getting justice for ourselves, be concerned with justice for others.

So, we "**open our ears to the cries of the poor.**" We offer mercy to our neighbor instead of condemnation. We look for ways to help our neighbor in all things. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live sanctified lives not for ourselves, not even for God, but for our neighbors. May he continue to grant us the faith and endurance to work in our Lord's kingdom.

Prayer: Dear Lord, grant me grace to see beyond my own needs. Allow me to see the needs in the lives of those around me. Bless me as I follow your commands and as I look to serve you by serving others. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Thursday, February 10, 2022
Read Proverbs 21:16-31

Don't Be Dumb

“Just don't be dumb!” This seems like an obvious (and slightly harsh) piece of advice, but it is also surprisingly valuable. Personally, over the course of my short life, and especially now (being in my “young” years) I have found this piece of advice to be particularly helpful. If I'm being completely honest, I need to tell myself this harsh piece of advice very often. My natural instinct and human nature is pretty dumb and pulls me in the direction of doing dumb things.

Well, this is the message that Solomon gives to his readers in this passage. He tells them, “**One who wanders from the way of good sense will rest in the assembly of the dead.**” In other words, “Don't be dumb! Because it can lead to some serious consequences.” He then takes the next ten verses to demonstrate what this dumbness looks like and what the consequences are. The overall message of this demonstration is this: you can't fool anyone. If you're not living how you should (dumbly), then people will notice. And with their noticing comes distrust and trouble.

But then starting in verse 27, Solomon's focus changes. At this point, he says, “**not only does this world around you know that you're living dumbly, but God knows too.**” You can't fool God. But instead of distrust and trouble, living dumbly to God means being “an abomination” and “perishing”. In the case of God, the stakes are much higher. Don't be dumb!

The problem, however, is that as humans we are dumb. It's our natural instinct and human nature. “**No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD.**” We are dumb, and nothing we could ever do can change that fact.

But Jesus isn't dumb. Jesus doesn't need to try and fool God the Father like we do because He is perfect. And He didn't keep that perfection to Himself. No, instead He broke into our dumbness and said, “You can't please the Father? Let me do it for you.” So now, on account of Jesus, though we are dumb, we are saved. Thank God for Jesus, who saves us from our own dumbness!

Prayer: “Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon ourselves the armor of light now in the time of this mortal life in which Your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility, that in the Last Days, when He shall come again in glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

- *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, Prayer for Newness of Life in Christ (p 1319)

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, February 18, 2022

Read Proverbs 22:1-14

Proverbs

In today's series of proverbs, we are faced with some uncomfortable realities. Take for instance verse 6. It says that if we raise children rightly, they will continue on the straight and narrow when they are grown. That sounds really good unless you have ever raised children or know anyone who was ever a child.

Actually, throughout the proverbs we read a lot of things that sound good until we try to think of counterexamples and find out that sometimes the fool and the wicked don't perish or come into ruin. Some children have very good parents and still turn out rotten. Do the Scriptures lie to us? Do we have cause to doubt what they say?

It's important to understand that the book of Proverbs is a collection of wisdom. These sayings aren't guaranteed to be magically accurate in every setting, they are just solid advice that we can use to help make our way through life. Even though they aren't always perfect, they are generally useful guidelines. It is usually the case that a good reputation will go further than a bigger bank account. It is usually the case that the humble are blessed more than the proud who flaunt their wealth until it's gone. And for those whose hearts hurt because our children have strayed from how they were raised, we can have some comfort that it is not entirely our fault for not training them well enough.

Most of all, when we see the wisdom of the book of Proverbs seem to be misleading, it can be a lesson to us that even the best human wisdom does not reach the perfection of God's wisdom. Yet, we can rejoice that God does not ask us to lead perfect lives in order to please Him. He gives us these proverbs to help us day-to-day. Where perfection is needed, God gives us the Gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Lord of all wisdom, we thank You for caring for both our bodies and souls by giving us the book of Proverbs. Teach us to heed its wisdom yet always understand that we cannot achieve perfection or trust in our own knowledge but only in You. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, February 19, 2022

Read [Proverbs 22:17-29](#)

“Learning Wisdom from the Wise”

Way back at the beginning of Proverbs, Solomon extolled the wisdom of learning Wisdom. He described how he himself was going to teach us, but he also urged us to learn wisdom from other wise people. And now, for the next 2 ½ chapters, King Solomon will demonstrate how this is done. Apparently, some of his wisdom came from an Egyptian that lived about a century before his time. Called “The Wisdom of Amenemope,” these thirty chapters of Egyptian wisdom have many similarities to what Solomon calls, “**thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge.**”

We can take a lesson from Solomon’s “wisdom thievery”. It’s likely that Amenemope believed in the false gods of Egypt. But that doesn’t automatically invalidate the wisdom that both he and Solomon tell us. “**Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, for the Lord will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them.**” The first part of this proverb closely mirrors the Egyptian’s words. The last part was added by Solomon. So should we do the opposite and rob the poor, or crush the afflicted, simply because that was the advice of a pagan? Certainly not!

No, God stated His covenant with Israel, “**I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**” In this, the first part applies to all people. God wrote His wisdom in the hearts of all humans (believers just understand it better because we know the Author).

We can learn of God’s will from even the unbelievers around us. Our secular government’s laws tell us to not kill, steal, or lie. Despite scientists today seeming to try to explain a universe without God in it, they nevertheless reveal and explain His majestic and glorious Creation to us. Psychologists may attempt to re-write God’s creation of humans as being Man and Woman, but using their knowledge of God’s biological sciences, they are still able to help us to care for the minds of the aged and infirm.

While God’s Law is written on the hearts of all people, allowing us to learn His Wisdom through many, we all need His Word to reveal His greatest gift, His Son Jesus. And knowing Jesus, we can understand the wisdom of Creation, life, and the world around us. But most of all, we know His love for us.

Prayer: Author of Wisdom, thank You for teaching me about You through all those around me. And, thank You for revealing Jesus to me through Your Word. In His Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, February 21, 2022

Read Proverbs 23:1-17

The Tough Love of Discipline

“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.” Proverbs 23:13-14

Certainly, these words of Solomon are instructions for parents. Children need discipline because all people need discipline, guardrails that show us the bounds of what is good and what is not. Without these guardrails, the sinful nature will always push just a little bit further and further. The point is not to be overly harsh, but to set clear boundaries within which a child can be safe, healthy, and grow to learn godly habits.

But these words are not merely about parents and children. They are all the more about our Father in heaven. After all, they seem to echo the sentiment of Proverbs 3:11-12. **“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”** When the writer to the Hebrews applies this proverb to us as God’s people, he adds, **“for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”** (Hebrews 12:11)

There is a phrase to consider – “those who have been trained by it.” The first lesson from the tough love of discipline is that we are not God. We cannot solve everyone of our problems. The first purpose of discipline from the Lord is to turn our eyes from ourselves to Christ. He is our hope, our comfort, our provider in life and in death. Discipline, difficulty, is used by God then not for our harm, but to call us back to Him, to rely on Christ in the words of the hymn “when every earthly prop gives way.”

This leads to the second purpose of the tough love of discipline – to follow Him, to listen for His Word (not just cling to our own wisdom). For only in clinging to Christ, only by the wisdom of His grace, will our souls be saved.

Prayer – Dear Heavenly Father, help me to receive Your discipline as from the Loving Father that You are, and trusting in You and in Your Son, remove all earthly props that I may follow Christ, the only way to life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

Read Proverbs 23:18-35

Guard and Protect Me and My Marriage

The world is always attacking me. No surprise, as my life has been changed by my Savior. Since He saved me from the world, it makes sense that the world wants to pull me back - and it cheats. The world is very willing to use my own body, my own nature to tempt me to leave my Savior.

Sometimes, the temptation comes with glorious, seeming, promises. Promises that it never keeps! But sometimes it loads the dice, the world is quite willing to make its offers seem more desirable. One way - the world puts stress on me. The world might picture life as hard and painful. Put stress on my body - and then comes the false but tempting promises: the world takes what God gives me for good use and tempts me with misuse.

God builds my marriage with my wife, He gives me and her good times. But the world tempts with "relationless" relations, claims the benefits of marriage aren't worth the efforts. God gives taste to foods, giving me body building and good health in supporting the body. But the world calls for suppressing stress with taste even when those suppressing tastes bring with them disaster for the body. The world doesn't care about how destroying a marriage, how pandering to tastes could end up destroying your life. It only cares about pulling me away from Jesus.

I thank you, Lord for Your words reminding and teaching me to listen to Your ways. I thank You for blinding me to the desires of the world, for keeping me Your child.

Prayer: Thank you God for telling me in words what I should know from my being your child. Please continue to protect and guard me from such sins of the body. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Read Proverbs 24:1-16

Wisdom—Honey from God

In this reading from Proverbs 24, we again see the one who is wise contrasted with the one who is evil. This might strike us a little odd at first—normally we think of “good” as the opposite of evil, rather than “wise”. But the key to these verses is how we define wisdom. Because wisdom can actually be defined a lot of different ways.

One way to define wisdom would be to look at the way the world works, and then define wisdom as “knowing what it takes to be successful in the world.” If we use this definition, we might talk about wisdom as having to do with knowing how to make money, manage people or companies, being shrewd and ruthless when it is necessary. This is certainly how our sinful world defines wisdom—wisdom is knowing how to get ahead of other people.

We could also define wisdom as simply knowledge or experience. The people who are the wisest must be those who have studied the longest and have PhDs. Or they must be the oldest people if experience equals wisdom. We see a lot of this too—we tend to think of educated and older people as very wise, which is why you see lots of the people in leadership and authority in our society as those who have a lot of education or life experience.

But if we think about it, none of these things—strategies for worldly success, knowledge, old age, or experience—are guarantees of wisdom. In fact, those who possess these traits often are the farthest away from true wisdom! True wisdom can only come from God—from understanding God’s will for us in our lives and acting according to that understanding. This isn’t always easy. Being truly wise means submitting to God’s authority and admitting that you don’t know everything. That you, in fact, are simply a limited creature. But it is in this true wisdom that we can resist those temptations to evil by submitting to God’s law, his will, in our daily lives. AS we see in verses 13-14: “My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.”

Prayer: Dear Lord, give to us the sweet honey of your wisdom. Let us receive it as a gift rather than rejecting it as a burden. Help us to see your will for our lives, and chasten me when I reject your will to follow my own. May thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Thursday, February 24, 2022
Read Proverbs 24:17-34

Tending the Garden

I love to garden. Ever since I was a kid, my family has always grown plants, from mint and magnolias to potatoes and peppers. Well, if you've ever tried to grow anything before, you know that you have to keep at it and not slack off even once in order to receive the benefits. Even after long, hard days when the last thing you want to do is spray water on a bunch of plants, you must tend to the garden or else you won't see any growth. Because if you don't tend to the garden, the plants will die fruitless and pitiful. But if you do tend to the garden, the rewards are sweet and plentiful.

In Genesis 2:15 we find that Adam was placed into the Garden of Eden to "work it and keep it". Why? Because it was God's! He had created it and it was good, therefore Adam was given the task to tend to God's creation. Though Adam failed quite dramatically at his assignment, even today the task itself hasn't changed. We as Christians, the sons and daughters of Adam, are called to work and keep the garden. We are called to tend to God's creation. Am I a good gardener or am I sluggish and lazy, forgetting the plants after long, hard days and allowing them to die fruitless and pitiful?

At this point, you may be wondering, "How do I tend to this 'garden'? I know I'm supposed to take care of God's creation, but it doesn't seem like it wants help. And Adam certainly wasn't a good example of how to do it properly!" Solomon is addressing these concerns in this passage.

He shows that you tend to the garden by loving your neighbor. Don't celebrate when they fail or look on them with hatred or envy. But love them. Tend to the garden by tending to your neighbor. Then he shows that you tend to the garden by taking care of yourself. You are a part of God's creation! Don't overwork or underwork and take your time to do things properly. Tend to the garden by tending to yourself. Finally, he shows that you tend to the garden by growing your faith. Your faith is a gift from God. Work at it and don't be lazy with it lest it becomes "overgrown with thorns," "covered with nettles," and "broken down". Tend to the garden by tending to your faith.

You are called to tend to God's creation. Now I encourage you to ask yourself, "What kind of gardener am I?"

Prayer: "O God, through the grace of Your Holy Spirit You pour the gifts of love into the hearts of Your faithful people. Grant Your servants health both of mind and body that they may love You with their whole heart and with their whole strength perform those things that are pleasing to You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen."

– *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, "Prayer for grace to love and serve God", pg. 1321

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, February 25, 2022

Read Proverbs 25:1-14

Discretion

As we have explored the book of Proverbs in our daily devotions for the last few months, some themes have been repeated over and over again. In a book of so many proverbs, it is hardly surprising that the same topic would need to be said more than once. Today, we will once again meditate on what Solomon teaches us about humility and discretion. We are told to avoid honoring ourselves or bragging about how great we are because of the great embarrassment of being proven wrong. Instead, it is better to assume a humble attitude and let others praise us for our talents and gifts. By the same token, we should not make anything known publicly that can be dealt with privately. If we air our neighbors' dirty laundry, we may find out that we are the ones who stink.

We see that even God Almighty Himself follows this precept. Verse 2 says "It is the glory of God to hide a matter." Now this may in part refer to the mysteries of the creation which are known to God that He allows us to investigate and find out for ourselves so that as we learn more about our world we can wonder again and again at its Creator. At the same time, we note that the glory of God is also to follow the advice of verse 9 and keep His quarrels between the parties involved. We have offended God greatly in our sins, but He is wise and loving to deal with us individually, not making light of His just accusations but putting the matter to rest quietly. He hides our sins in the empty tomb of His Son Jesus Christ so that no one can say that we have any unrighteousness anymore. Our shame and bad reputation have been laid on Christ and crucified on the cross. So, we are able to live in wisdom and security, knowing that God has dealt kindly with us and will do so again.

Prayer: God of Wisdom, we thank You for the gift of knowledge and even more for the mercy You have shown to us by not putting us to shame but by dealing with our sins on the cross and glorifying us with Your Son in His resurrection. Keep us always in this love. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, February 26, 2022

Read [Proverbs 25:15-28](#)

“Self-Control”

Our reading for today consists of proverbs revolving around “self-control”. They range from the obvious, “**If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.**” Honey represents anything that is good (in moderation) but that we might have trouble consuming with self-control: chocolate, ice cream, beer, romance, etc. In the last verse is another that might call to mind the headlines of today, “**A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.**” Sound like Russian President Putin, breaking down the walls of his neighbor for no good reason other than because he wants to? Literal death and destruction to satisfy his hunger for power and control.

Galatians 5 describes “self-control” as one of the fruits of the Spirit. In our current ice and cold it’s hard to use an analogy of plants growing fruit, but bear with me. A plant has to be healthy, nourished, and watered to bear fruit. And, the fruit it bears will depend on the quality of the soil and water. If chemicals are in the water, they will be passed on to those who eat the fruit.

Like plants, when people are “fed and watered” they produce fruit. If they don’t have enough nutrition to be physically healthy, they won’t grow and be able to bear children. Similarly, if they’re not fed by the Holy Spirit, they will have a spiritual hole in their stomach, and the fruit they bear will not be good. Self-Control probably isn’t a spiritual fruit most of us have ever prayed for, but it allows us to govern our lives according to God’s Will.

With self-control, we think before we act. With it, we knowingly use the other spiritual fruits (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness) as God would have us. We kindly speak to our neighbor “**with a soft tongue**” to persuade them of something. We don’t “**bear false witness**” because we know that would hurt our neighbor as much as a physical weapon. We don’t give in to temptation, as we know it “**muddies our spiritual waters**” and pollutes our “**spiritual fountain**”.

All people have a hunger and feed it somehow; but attempting to feed it through gluttony, drunkenness, or the lust for power only leads to death. In 22 days, when Spring comes and plants begin to sprout around us, we may better understand this fruity analogy. But it beautifully portrays this good, spiritual fruit bursting forth into the world around us solely by our feeding by the Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, bless me with self-control that I may better serve myself and my neighbor. Through Jesus, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, February 28, 2022

Read Proverbs 26:1-14

The Fool in the Mirror

**“Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.” Proverbs 26:12**

As we are reading through the book of Proverbs, there are days when the statements move from one topic to another with such a rapid pace that it is hard to keep track of where Solomon is going. Today’s reading is different. Solomon is reflecting on the nature of fools, and his thoughts will continue well into the next few days.

In general, the fool of Proverbs is one who refuses to hear the Word of God or, at least, acts as though it doesn’t matter. I am quick to claim that I have nothing to do with the fool. I rush to state that, “I am no fool!” But sometimes, I am worse.

Perhaps you can understand this too. The proverb stated above is piercing to anyone who hates being wrong. If you don’t like to be corrected, this proverb cuts close to home. Truth be told, in our pride, we all struggle with correction. We cling to our own ideas, even when God’s word confronts us. One who is wise in His own eyes doesn’t need to be taught anything...he already knows it all!

Perhaps this is just personal confession, but I imagine many of you struggle with the same temptation to pride. When Solomon says, “there is more hope than a fool than for him,” his point is clear – you can’t teach someone out of pride. We need to be confronted, not merely with the right information, but the fact that we are sinful, regularly erring people. We need such harsh words as pepper this conversation by Solomon to recognize our helplessness, our lack of wisdom...apart from Christ.

His wise foolishness of self-sacrifice and crucifixion – this is my only hope! The wisdom of His mercy alone rescues me (and you) who so often foolishly trust in our own wisdom.

Prayer – Dear Heavenly Father, when pride wells up in me, humble me by Your Word. Show me once more that my only hope is in You and in Your Son Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, March 1, 2022
Read Proverbs 26:15-28

My Contradiction

I always find that I consider my thoughts the best. That is, my desires, my dreams, my plans seem to me to be so valued that I can justify (to myself) over-riding anything others might care for. That is not God's Way! I find I am always struggling to change. Oh, God! Change me. Teach my thoughts to follow His ways.

The thoughts of a person's mind express the hidden desires and intentions of the heart. Laziness, gossip, deceit are expressed in words. The heart shoves over the mind, inflaming desire, attempting to mask itself from others and even from itself. There is only one cure, that is Jesus Christ. Only a change can keep me from being / doing those evil intentions of my heart. It is, after all, me. I can't do it to myself, therein lies a contradiction. If I could change myself, I wouldn't need to change. But I do. As the Apostle Paul says, "wretched man that I am!" I need God's gift of a change.

Jesus has promised! He comes to us bringing a gift. He gives us trust, trust in Him. As we trust in Him, He removes the power of that evilness in our hearts to control us. Yes, my heart, my old evil heart is changed, I am something new. The desires of my body may still reflect the old ways, my inclinations try to be lazy, gossip, deceive, but now my heart hears Jesus, lives with Him, and so does the opposite, does what is good.

Prayer: Thank you, God. You came to me in the filth of my natural self, you cleaned me up. You keep giving me that cleansing. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Read Proverbs 27:1-13

God is in Control—Thank God!

We see again in these verses from Proverbs 27 a lot of both practical and spiritual advice when it comes to the things we do and say. At first, we might be tempted to say that it seems like fairly straightforward practical advice that anyone can follow. And that is true to a certain extent. But behind each of these Proverbs is also the idea that God is at work in our world and in our lives.

For example, verse 1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.” We see that this is true on a basic level—not of us can truly know the future. Though many journalists, politicians, weathermen/women, and stockbrokers believe they can, no one can predict what is going to happen! We often do this as well, assuming many things about the future. On the surface, this may seem scary or depressing—anything can happen, and we have little control! However, for the Christian who reads this proverb, it’s not a proverb that should lead us to despair! Because we know that although we can’t know the future, God can. He knows all and has promised to take care of us according to his will.

As we read the other proverbs in these verses, we can see that behind all of them is the implicit promise that there is one who is the source of all goodness and wisdom—God. It doesn’t come from inside of us, but from outside of us. And while it might be painful to learn the wisdom of God because we are sinful people, verse 5 still rings true: “Better is open rebuke than hidden love.”

On this Ash Wednesday, as we enter a season of Lenten repentance, we remember that our ways are sinful, but that we have a God who is faithful. And as he refines us in righteousness by the gift of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we understand that God has truly removed all obstacles to a relationship with him. Through the cross, that ugly and shameful image, we are redeemed, and gain a holy wisdom that only God himself can impart.

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to see you at work even in the broken and ugly things of this world. Help me to see that though my sins are as scarlet, you have made them white as snow. Give us the wisdom to know that you are in control always. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Thursday, March 3, 2022
Read Proverbs 27:14-27

Who Am I?

“As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man” (vs. 19). Who are you? What type of person are you? Are you a helpful, positive person, or are you negative and harmful? Are you a genuine person or superficial? These are the questions that Solomon encourages us to ask ourselves in this passage. Solomon believes that how you act directly speaks to who you are.

So how do you act? Who are you?

The issue that we run into with this is that we know who we are, we are redeemed children of God, but we rarely actually act as such. Instead of outwardly loving our neighbors with kind words, we often complement them “with a loud voice” seeking our own recognition. Instead of surrounding ourselves with other children of God who empower us to better serve our neighbors, we often spend time with friends who encourage us to live in sin. Instead of trusting and honoring our “masters,” we often gossip about them and speak harmful words behind their backs. Instead of “knowing well” and “giving attention” to those who rely and depend on us, we often use them for our own advancement.

What do these actions speak to who you are? How do you act? Who are you? Certainly, no child of God would do these things, so we are not worthy to be children of God. As Solomon would point out, we don’t act like children of God, therefore we must not be children of God.

But we truly are. Regardless of our sin, we are children of God because Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose to pay the cost for our adoption. He knows well the sinful condition of His flock, and He gives attention to His herds. He knows we’re sinful, so He saves us from that sin. He’s our savior not just because that’s His title, but because He’s actually done it! Jesus truly is our savior because He has actively saved us.

So, in answer to Solomon’s question, I encourage you to ask a different question. Instead of answering “Who am I?” instead ask, “Who is Jesus?” Jesus is God’s own Son, the King of Heaven, the Prince of Peace, and the Great Redeemer. And He has redeemed **you**. Now live in that redemption.

Prayer: “Almighty God, You gave Your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Himself. Grant that we, Your adopted children by grace, may daily be renewed by Your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

- *Lutheran Service Book*, “Prayer for spiritual renewal,” pg. 312

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, March 4, 2022
Read Proverbs 28:1-14

Blessed

Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity. Our text for today offers a series of contrasting images: the rich vs. the poor, the wise vs. the foolish, the keeper of the law vs. the transgressor of the law, the stingy vs. the generous. At the end, it settles on the key difference that matters. There is nothing more to life than to fear the LORD always.

Nevertheless, fearing the LORD looks like a lot of different things. In verse 1, it looks like boldness in the confidence that our God will uphold His people. In verse 2, it looks like stability in reliance on upright and wise rulers who follow God's wise law. In verse 5, it is understanding justice and the right way that the world and society should function. In verse 8, it is being generous to the poor instead of taking from them even the little they have (as an aside, this verse is not a prohibition of Christians owning stocks or bonds or pension plans which would be foolish in our modern economic system, instead it is a warning against the person who believes that the purpose of money is to make more money when it is instead to help the neighbor.) Finally, in verse 13, fearing the LORD requires honesty. And the deepest form of honesty is the confession of our personal sins and failures.

Fearing the LORD involves confessing to Him all those times that we have not feared Him properly or lived up to His law. We confess those times we have turned away or acted like the wicked man or used riches for our own advantage instead of our neighbors'. Yet, Scripture says it is at these times that we are most truly blessed because we know God's abundant mercy and trust that He will cleanse us from our sins.

Prayer: God of all wisdom, we thank You that You give us Your Law to direct our lives in righteousness. We thank You all the more that when we do not walk in Your ways, You take away our sin through Your Son, our Lord. Send us Your Spirit to strengthen us toward holy and righteous living. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, March 5, 2022

Read [Proverbs 28:15-28](#)

“Earthly Words”

The Church is often accused of having its “head in the clouds,” of speaking only of the glories of heaven but ignoring life on earth. Even the Bible itself points out the imperfection of our life here, surrounded by a fallen, death-filled world. It’s only natural that at least one of the messages of the Church should be to point to the future, to look to our blissful, tearless and joy-filled eternal life in heaven with God. That vision, that promise, truly is what we should and do properly long for.

But the Bible is not a book for us to study after we get to heaven; its pages are filled with deceit, injustice, death, pain, sorrow, and sin. My guess is the Bible will be banned in heaven, because those things have no place there. The Bible is filled with stories of people struggling to live in our sinful, broken world because it’s written for us, here in our fallen world. It’s written by sinners, for sinners; but inspired by our sinless, perfect God. And Proverbs is all about living as wise sinners in our fallen world.

The wisdom found in Proverbs sometimes helps our life here on earth. “Don’t kill (or hurt one another)”, it teaches, because **“If one is burdened with the blood of another, he will be a fugitive until death; let no one help him.”** “Work hard and you will be rewarded,” it encourages, as **“Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.”**

Sometimes, though, Godly wisdom doesn’t help the believer but serves another purpose: **“Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.”** Giving to the poor does nothing for the giver, actually costing him or her hard-earned money. But living wisely, as this proverb teaches, helps those who can’t help themselves. It helps our neighbor. And it shows God’s love to someone who may not know God, while turning our hearts from the love of money.

And, Proverbs is also filled with hints of the glory to come, glimpses of the perfect place that awaits us: **“A faithful man will abound with blessings,” “Whoever walks in integrity will be delivered,”** and **“the one who trusts in the Lord will be enriched.”** After all, it’s hard to find a page in the Bible that doesn’t carry at least a tiny piece of the Good News of our eternal future, standing face to face with our Lord and Savior.

Prayer: Word of God, fill me with Your wisdom that I may experience a foretaste of Your heavenly kingdom. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, March 7, 2022

Read Proverbs 29:1-14

Slow to Speak

**“A fool gives full vent to his spirit,
But a wise man quietly holds it back.”** Proverbs 29:11

When I read this proverb, I was struck by how different this sentiment is than our current age. Everyone is seemingly encouraged to share every opinion on t-shirts, Twitter, bumper stickers, everywhere. In the name of freedom and self-expression, everyone’s opinion about everything is broadcast and plastered for others to see. Of course, to **“give full vent to his spirit”** would not only be declare opinions, but to act on every whim and desire.

In considering the fruit of the spirit that Paul describes in Galatians 5 (peace, joy, love, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control), we tend to see the value in each of these attributes, except for maybe the last two. Today’s proverb especially focuses us on the down-played virtue of self-control. But why is this, not only wise, but a fruit of God’s Spirit?

Put simply, sin. In light of our brokenness, not all of our opinions are correct or beneficial to others. On account of original sin, Jeremiah says, **“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick”** (Jer. 17:9). That’s hard for us to hear in a world that tells us to find truth by “following your heart.”

Instead, Scripture encourages us to hold back from following our every desire and follow our Lord. Specifically, in Philippians 2, Paul says, “hold fast to the word of life.” Better than our opinions or our whims are the truth, wisdom, and life to be found in God’s Word. Why? Not just because they are from God (though that would be enough), but even better because His Word brings us Christ, the eternal wisdom and source of never-ending life.

Prayer – Dear Heavenly Father, let me follow the words of James and be “slow to speak, quick to listen,” and continually grounded in the hope of Christ. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, March 8, 2022
Read Proverbs 29:15-27

The Foolishness of Hiding

“every man’s judgment cometh from the Lord” Proverbs 29:26

I find that I am always looking for a way to clear my reputation, to make whatever I have done (or wanted to do) look good in the eyes of others. After all, those around me are the ones whose opinion of me will determine what others will do to or for me. A covered up mistake seems meaningless when considered that way.

But ... while I keep looking for those covers, yet I am continually reminded that I can’t hide from my Lord. And I even remind myself, I don’t want to cover up before Him. With Him there are no “mistakes”, there are just my sins, placing me away from God, hurting myself far more than others could do to/for me. So, I appreciate Proverbs when I am told that the only judgment placed on me that counts, is the one that God makes.

It's so hard! I find that my own activities are always a barrier between me and God. My efforts to please Him are so filled with selfishness that they are worse than no effort. God wants a “broken” heart, a realization that I have failed, that any attempts at covering up are not only revealed but are themselves part of the problem.

It is His love and approaching to me that repairs that broken heart. It is His taking me under His wing, forgiving, and living in me that enables light and goodness to shine in myself! As always, I rest in Him.

Prayer: Dear God. Thank you for coming to me in spite of my efforts to hide myself and flee from You. Please stay and keep me true, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Read Proverbs 30:1-17

Refuge for the Weary

Life can be exhausting sometimes. I doubt anyone will disagree with that statement. With all of the stresses of work, family life, the things happening in our world and communities, and all of our other responsibilities, we can start to feel tired, broken, hurt, and confused. We might feel like failures, or that we're so burnt out we just can't do anything more. In our reading from Proverbs today, this is the way that Agur, the author, feels. He is weary, feels stupid, feels like he has no knowledge of God or his wisdom.

We feel the same way sometimes. Though we strive, it sometimes seems God is far away from us, that his wisdom is inaccessible. But this is where verse 5 can give us comfort: "Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him." God's word and wisdom still break forth, cutting through our weariness and frustration. While we acknowledge that many of God's ways are unknowable, he is ultimately on our side, and the words that he does give us can provide refuge.

Agur goes on to make some requests of God which show that he understands some of God's wisdom. He asks that falsehood and lies be removed from him, and also that he be "neither poor nor rich" so that he is not tempted to disregard God (as rich people often do) or to steal (as poor people are driven to do). This is godly wisdom! If many in the world were granted three wishes, one would likely be for unlimited wealth. But as we see here, that wouldn't be the wisest decision—wealth can corrupt.

In all of these verses, we see that few seem to seek the wisdom of God. Humans, including ourselves, seem to have a knack for pursuing their own gains rather than holy wisdom or knowledge of God. But verses 11-14 make it clear that when we focus on our selfish desires, we end up doing great harm to those around us. Thankfully, God guides us with that word of truth, which is a shield and refuge. Let us cling to God's word in the midst of a world that often fails to even acknowledge him! He will lift us up when we are weary.

Prayer: Lord, we come to you as sinful, weary people. We often feel far from you because of our own sin and the sin around us. Center us in your word of truth and be for us a holy refuge. Open our ears to obey your wisdom and help us put away the desires of the flesh. Redeem us and lift us up and give us renewed spirits to serve our neighbor through our vocations. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Alex Smith

Thursday, March 10, 2022
Read Proverbs 30:18-33

Incomprehensible Love

Upon first reading this passage, I thought to myself, “What in the world does that mean? I’m supposed to write a devotion on that?” I began to worry and stress because I didn’t “get it”. So, I read it a few more times and thought really hard about it and read some reference material on it trying to make sense of what Agur was saying. But I still ended up in the exact same place, scratching my head thinking, “I don’t get it.”

But then it hit me. That’s the whole point! We aren’t supposed to “get it” because there are some things we simply can’t understand. For Agur, those nonsensical things that just didn’t make sense were the wonders found in God’s creation. He asks, how do snakes move without legs? How can a slave become a king? How do locusts all know what to do without a leader? How can animals be so confident in their individual roles? These things amazed and were incomprehensible for Agur!

For us, the wonder of God’s creation is still amazing and beautiful. We gaze at the starry night sky and marvel at its vastness. We wake in the morning and wonder how each individual bird knows what song to sing. We stare in shock and amazement at the birth of a baby. We marvel at the incomprehensibility of God’s creation. But even more so, we marvel at the incomprehensibility of God’s love for us which He expressed through His Son, Jesus Christ.

We disobey and betray God every day with every sin. We deserve nothing but wrath and punishment. But instead, He forgives us. Instead, He loves us. Instead, He sent His Son to die for us. We don’t get it! It doesn’t make sense! But it’s nevertheless true. We can’t “get it”. It is and always will be beyond our comprehension. So only a fool would try and understand. Instead, just marvel in God’s nonsensical love. Marvel in Jesus’s sacrifice. And marvel in our undeserved forgiveness and redemption.

Prayer: “O God, You resist the proud and give grace to the humble. Grant us true humility after the likeness of Your only Son that we may never be arrogant and prideful and thus provoke Your wrath, but in all lowliness be made partakers of the gifts of Your grace; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

- *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, “Prayer for humility,” pg. 1321

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, March 11, 2022
Read Proverbs 31:1-15

What are You Doing?

These are words we've all heard at some point or another. And while they fit well in a context where someone is legitimately curious about our activities, I would wager to say that's not the tone you read the title with. There's nothing worse than being caught doing something you aren't supposed to do. In the case of our passage today, we hear the words of the king's mother chiding him for wasting his time on women and strong drink. We don't know much about this king, though it's possible he was a minor Arabian prince. Still, the advice his mother taught him is useful for all who have authority. She teaches that power and authority come with the obligation to use them rightly. It is obvious to a Christian that wasting our wealth on "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" is foolish, but there are plenty of less obvious sins and vices that we fall prey to often and waste our efforts in trying to gain. How often do we squander our wealth trying to gain more wealth or waste our power protecting our power? Instead, since we have all been given authority over many things in our life, we are to use them to uphold the rights of the poor and to support the poor and needy.

We have for our example in all of this our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of all creation and could have just as easily used that authority to enjoy life. If Jesus' goal was the preservation of His own life, the Gospels would be very different books. Instead, He used His great power and might to save us, poor, destitute, needy sinners. He gave all that He had, even His own life, to help us. We follow in the path He trod whenever we use the gifts we have been given to do His work of showing love and kindness to our neighbors so that we never have to fear someone asking us "what are you doing?"

Prayer: Lord, we praise Your glorious name because of what You have done for us when we were in need. Lead us to use our resources and power wisely for the benefit of all of Your people. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Case Farney

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Read [Proverbs 31:10-31](#)

“An Excellent Wife”

In the 1984 film, Ghostbusters, there’s a scene where one of the Ghostbusters describes the building that attracts all the ghosts. “The roof structure is exactly like the kind of telemetry tracker that NASA uses to track dead pulsars in deep space...” It’s made of “cold-riveted girders with cores of pure selenium”. Bill Murray, playing a “not-so-bright” psychologist, replies, “I guess they just don’t make them like they used to, huh?” To which Dan Akroyd’s character smacks him and exclaims, “No! Nobody ever made them like this!”

This final section from the book of Proverbs describes an “excellent wife” as “far more precious than jewels”. Men: when you were in your teens, did you ever imagine your ideal woman? I won’t share my list if you don’t share yours, but I’ll bet this reading beats what you or I dreamt up, hands down.

“She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.” Selfless!

“She brings her food from afar.” Delicious cooking, all kinds!

“Her lamp does not go out at night.” Hard worker!

“She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.” Industrious!
Ingenious!

“She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.” Awww!

“She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.” Smart!

“She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.”
She gets up early to feed the servants!?

Now, no offense to the women (I know this describes most of you sometimes; my wife most of the time), but when it comes to husbands or wives, women or men, adults or children; Dan Akroyd was right: “No! Nobody ever made them like this!” This reading, while beautiful and full of great material for a Mother’s Day card, describes no earthly woman (or man). But it’s a fitting conclusion to the book of Proverbs. What have we been hearing about the past few months? Wisdom. And in Hebrew, Wisdom is a feminine word.

Wisdom, we’ve learned, is the knowledge of the true God and faith in Him alone. It’s the fear and love of God. Wisdom is knowing Jesus. Go back now, and re-read this scripture, thinking about your relationship with God whenever you read a reference to this “Wonder Woman”.

Prayer: Faithful God, You love me, care for me, nurture me, feed me, and even died for me like no one else can ever do! Thank you for inspiring men and women everywhere to look to You as a role model to love their families as You love us. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson