



Greeting and Sharing our Joys and Concerns

Prelude: My Shepherd Will Supply My Need arr. Gilbert M. Martin

Lighting of the Candles:

Welcome in the Name our Lord Jesus Christ; Who was, Who is, and Who will come

September 12th, 2021 16th Sunday after Pentecost

***Opening Hymn: Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing**

No. 400

- 1. Come, thou Fount of every blessing! Tune my heart to sing thy grace! Streams of mercy never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above; Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, Name of thy redeeming love.**
- 2. Here I raise mine Ebenezer; hither by thy help I'm come; and I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wandering from the fold of God; he, to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood.**
- 3. O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be! Let thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to thee! Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart--O take and seal it; Seal it for thy courts above!**

Call to Worship

Pastor: The Law of the Lord is perfect

People: It revives the soul

Pastor: The decrees of the Lord are sure

People: Making those who listen wise

Pastor: The commandment of the Lord is clear;

People: It enlightens the eyes

Pastor: The ordinances of the Lord are true:

People: And righteous altogether!

Unison Prayer: Guide us, God, by the living words in these ancient texts, that we may strive to see you in all people and places, and may live to love as you do. Amen.

OT Reading Proverbs 1: 20-33

NT Reading James 3: 1-12

***Hymn: Make Me a Channel of Your Peace**

FWS No. 2171

- 1. Make me a channel of your Peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring your love. Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord, and where there's doubt, true faith in you.**
- 2. Make me a channel of your peace. Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope. Where there is darkness, only light, and where there's sadness, only light, and where there's sadness, ever joy.**
- 3. Oh Master, grant that I may never seek___ so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love with all my soul.**
- 4. Make me a channel of your peace. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned, in giving of ourselves that we receive, and in dying that we're born to eternal life.**

Gospel Reading: Mark 8: 27-38

Pastor: The word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God!

Message: Wisdom

"He's smart, he just doesn't have a lick of common sense." Does this sentence sound familiar to you? I find that when I'm talking with people about their children or about young

adults maturing into adulthood, I hear a lot about wisdom. "She can get all her trigonometry homework correct, she just can't save any money."

It seems like there's a clear distinction between intelligence and wisdom. This is probably something that you know intuitively, based on the scenarios you've been in around you.

You may have heard the insult 'egghead' growing up, which was not used very often when I grew up. But, out of curiosity, my mom and I looked up the definition of the insult. It is used for someone who is intelligent but has no common sense. It seems to be an insult used on academics.

But academics and children are not the only 2 types of people to blame for a lack of common sense though, or else our world would look quite different at the moment.

Wisdom is an interesting character in The Bible. Wisdom is often labeled as a 'she', and is seen as an entity that has been around for a long time. In seminary, I learned that in 1 or 2 cases, Wisdom is read as being around at the beginning of the world.

I think an ancient semintic understanding of wisdom looks different than our understanding of wisdom, in a philosophical sense. This Proverbs passage, wisdom is personified. She is a person of sorts, and she is acting. She is passing judgment.

It interests me that usually God is the one passing these judgments. Makes you wonder what her position is in relation to God.

I think a lot of us would agree that her judgment is deserved, since these people are not learning from wisdom. They are scoffing and ignoring. Abusing.

Today, wisdom is something that we say we own, or acquire. We "have" it, or not. It is not usually personified, it is something that we try to learn. It is something that we try to teach. It is something that we try to copy, and often we look to mentors to help us become more wise.

Often, 'time' is something that is said to help us become more wise. We "learn our lesson" over time.

But sometimes being left on our own causes problems to worsen. It seems that in certain jobs, mentors are suggested to help someone be more wise in their profession. To train them in better ways before the lesson of time drives wisdom into them...

As someone who has had many mentors over the years, I have always been very thankful for the wisdom of my elders.

However, it is harder to absorb 'objective' wisdom in a profession where you work with people, because you learn wisdom from those around you, as much as they learn from you.

And sometimes age is a factor: Can someone seasoned by time and experience learn wisdom from someone many years younger than them? It's a good question.

If we saw wisdom as a personified person, as we do in the Proverbs reading, then yes. Anyone who listened to wisdom could share advice.

Where are you learning from wisdom in your life right now? Where are you suggesting to others that they be more wise? I think we all have something on our minds, especially in this time of covid.

We're always encouraging other people to be wise. I've heard a lot of questions lately about "why aren't people smarter about this?"

I think we are looking for wisdom from many different kinds of people. And while so many answers in our lives are subjective, sometimes things are less subjective. I think that wisdom can be more objective in certain scenarios.

If, like wisdom personified does in this passage, we see people in the streets who hate knowledge and ignore counsel, we have a job. Our job is to approach them about this.

Not all our judgments will be correct, but as people who are furthering the kingdom of God, we need to be able to make statements about what is wise and what is not.

While we are a diverse body, we must gain wisdom from one another. We must be able to have good judgment. If we cannot have good judgment, then we are in need of someone who can counsel us and our decision making.

I believe that people who are acting unwisely usually know they are acting in a certain way. But perhaps the ends justify the means for them. I think we are naturally fairly intelligent creatures, but sometimes we can go astray based on poor judgment.

I think that's why in the James reading, James says "not many of you should become teachers", because teachers will be judged with greater strictness.

As someone who speaks from a pulpit, this passage kind of makes me nervous. But James makes a really good point, that it's what comes out of our mouths that has influence. A teaching position should not be taken lightly. This especially goes for mentors: if someone is looking to you for wisdom, you must be very careful what comes out of your mouth.

It is one thing to make a decision on one's own, and another to listen to the advice of someone else. A temptation can be to mindlessly follow the advice of someone else.

But God calls us to be mindful people. Sometimes we can be too mindful, as in the case of Peter rebuking Christ because Christ "was not making a lot of sense."

We should always be careful of trying to second guess the work of the Spirit. But the Spirit will never recommend that we be unwise.

I think there is a distinction between taking a risk and being purposely unwise. A calculated risk can be wise, but throwing caution to the wind and living any way we think we want to does not say "loving one's neighbor".

As you'll remember from scripture, "be wise as serpents but as innocent as doves." As people in a time where there is a lot of hardship around us, I think it's time to reevaluate where wisdom is crying out in the square, and potentially being ignored.

Where can we speak on behalf of wisdom? First, we must be filled with true knowledge. We must be filled with the holy spirit, we must be filled with the fruits of the spirit.. As James reminds us, those who teach will be held to greater strictness. We must be very careful what we say, and how we say it. But that shouldn't deter us from doing what we were made to do.

Well often we suffer based on our own doing, we know that Christ came to take away some of that pain that we brought upon ourselves. All of us have acted unwisely: all of us have fallen short of the glory of God. But God himself came to assist us.

The least we can do is heed this call to be wise, to be careful with what we say, to bear our cross to follow him who came before us to help us. You mustn't be ashamed of being kind, of being generous, of being merciful. We mustn't be ashamed of humility.

So I encourage you to watch your tongue as you speak to people and about people concerning wisdom. Recognize shortcomings, but do not emphasize them. Be gracious, be merciful, but be firm in what you believe in. Reevaluate your beliefs if you see that they are hurting others. And as always, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and redeemer.

Offering and Doxology

No. 94

Pastoral Prayer:

Pastor: In peace, we pray to you, Lord God. For all people in their daily life and work;

People: For our families, friends, and neighbors, and for those who are alone.

Pastor: For this community, the nation, and the world;

People: For all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

Pastor: For the just and proper use of your creation;

People: For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.

Pastor: For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

People: For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.

Pastor: For the peace and unity of the Church of God;

People: For all who proclaim the Gospel, and all who seek the Truth.

Pastor: For Bishop Mark Webb, DS Mike Weeden, all bishops and other ministers;

People: For all who serve God in his Church.

Pastor: For the special needs and concerns of this congregation. **silence for personal prayers** Hear us, Lord;

People: For your mercy is great.

Pastor: We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life. **silence for personal prayers** We will exalt you, O God our King;

People: And praise your Name for ever and ever.

Pastor: We pray for all who have died, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom. **silence for personal prayers** Lord, let your loving-kindness be upon them;

People: Who put their trust in you.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and power and the glory forever. Amen

***Closing Hymn: Take My Life and Let It Be**

No. 399

- 1. Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love. Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.**
- 2. Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King. Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from thee. Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold. Take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.**
- 3. Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine. Take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne. Take my love, my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure-store. Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.**

Announcements:

Northern Flow District Gathering of Pastors today at 3pm here in Potsdam UMC.

Benediction: 2 Cor. 13:11 - Finally, siblings, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Postlude: Celebration on "Warrenton" from The Sacred Harp arr. Douglas E.Wagner