

Focus: Jesus shows us wisdom in the cross.

When I exit my house, the last thing I see is a magnet on the doorpost that displays a proverb said to be by Abraham Lincoln. “Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today.”

Now look, I have this magnet not because I’m really good at it—quite the opposite, I’m a grade-A procrastinator and need the reminder! And the truth is if you’re like me, sometimes we don’t only put off *doing* things, but we put off making the hard decisions, facing the hard truths, owning up to reality. That seems to be what’s going on in today’s reading from Proverbs in which we meet one of the most curious characters in the book of Wisdom, so-called “Lady Wisdom.” If you think of Lady Liberty, that is sort of the idea. Lady Wisdom is a proverbial character who personifies and embodies the Wisdom of God.

And what is striking is how out-in-front she is. She stands at the street corner, she lifts her voice, she cries out! For all the talk about secret or hidden wisdom, Wisdom is not portrayed as someone who is hard to find. No, she is in your face shouting, “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you.”

And yet...no one comes to learn from her. No one cares what she has to say. They would rather go their own way. They have places to go, people to see, things to do. Maybe they are busy. Maybe Wisdom has some lessons to learn that they would rather not hear. Maybe they’ll come back tomorrow and hear her out...if their packed schedule permits it.

Whatever the case, like the person going to the beach without sunscreen—okay, that one is me, too—they come to regret it. Wisdom says, “when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.” Too late. We have all had that experience of only realizing we need something after the chance has come and gone.

But doesn’t it seem like Wisdom is being punitive here? Well, here is what she says, “Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.” Notice what the punishment is? Wisdom simply gives them what they asked for. “They shall eat the fruit of their own way and be sated with their own devices.” The problem is, since they aren’t wise, as any parent of a young child could tell you, what they want isn’t actually good for them. Remember earlier this summer when God was angry at the people of Israel for rejecting him and asking for a king? Remember how God punished them? By giving them a king—in other words, God punished them simply by giving them what they wanted! Or what they thought they wanted. Well, so often it is the same for us; the things we want aren’t the things that will make us happy in the long-run.

How many problems in our world could be avoided if we wanted better things? Family, God’s good earth, justice, equality, our life together as the church, don’t these all break down because

each of us thinks we can “bend the rules” just a skosh for what *I think I want* at the given moment? But when everyone does that all the time, the results are calamitous. A plague on our bodies and souls collectively and individually.

Peter learns that lesson today—or rather he begins to learn that lesson. After correctly identifying Jesus as God’s “Messiah” or *anointed* or *chosen* one (think of Samuel anointing David earlier this year to choose him as king), Peter has to learn with the rest of the disciples what that means. “Then [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” Peter doesn’t want to hear it. We might think that it’s because he’s worried about his friend Jesus. But I think it’s more complicated: I think Peter is worried about *himself* as well! And for good reason: it is hard being Jesus’s friend, being the friend of a crucified convict and enemy of both the temple and the state. Peter had been hoping that Jesus being the Messiah, God’s chosen one would redound back to him with power, fame, prestige. But if this is what it means, Peter’s going to get very little of that. In fact, he can now only expect disrespect and even persecution—which is in fact what he gets in the book of Acts.

And Jesus zeroes in on the problem. He rebukes Peter, and he says, “Get behind me Satan for you are setting your mind not on divine things, but on human things.”

The frailty of human things. Peter is going to see that. Come Good Friday, Peter is in for a rude awakening. His mind still set on human things can’t deal with what it means for Jesus to be the *crucified* Messiah. He panics. He denies Jesus. He deserts him. He cuts and runs. Good Friday is Peter’s “that was due *today*???” moment, and he’s not ready. He can’t handle it.

Thankfully, the story goes on. That’s what Jesus’s resurrection does. Peter does get a second chance as we hear about in Eastertide.

We get second chances as well. Every day of our lives is a second chance to listen to wisdom, to set our mind on divine things instead of human ones, to get our priorities in order, our ducks in a row. Ask yourself; ask God: Is Christ the first priority in your life, or is it something else? Wisdom stood on the street corner and cried out. But Jesus Christ went to the cross for us, offers himself in bread and wine, his body and blood poured out at this altar. Will we listen to his words? Will we choose to love the divine things that Jesus loves? Will we follow him in service to our fellow human beings? Committing to Christ is not a decision we can put off until the storms of life come, as we know they will. The choice is before us *now* and every moment of our lives. May we choose wisely while it is still today. **Amen.**