

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Pentecost
 November 13, 2016
 Proverbs 3:1-12

In Christ Jesus, Dear Children of the Word, Fellow Redeemed,

Last Sunday we heard about real hearing ears. We heard how Samuel listened intently to God speaking to him and how he then faithfully told what God had said. This morning we are looking into God's Word for true wisdom—wisdom which we also need to listen to carefully and apply to our lives.

Our text comes from the book of Proverbs. The Hebrew word for "Proverb" literally means—"to compare." That word describes the style of this book. The good is contrasted or compared with the bad in shorter or longer phrases. We call these phrases **PROVERBS**: that is—a sentence which briefly expresses some practical truth; in other words a **WISE SAYING!**

But why look to the Bible for wise sayings? Isn't the world full of wise sayings? Didn't Confucius proclaim hundreds if not thousands of wise sayings, so that today it is still common to hear people say: "Confucius says..."? Don't the educators, philosophers, psychologists, politicians and scientists of our day flood us with their wise statements and teachings? The media also teaches us their brand of wisdom. Before you know it we are listening to hundreds of voices shouting at us, luring us to follow them, to adhere to their wisdom, to make their wisdom our way of life and our philosophy of life.

It is much like the advertisements we see on T.V. Everyone is out there trying to sell their product as the best, the most appealing, the fastest, the easiest, the cleanest, the most economical, the most efficient, the most environmentally safe, etc. But whose advertisement will we listen to and believe?

Solomon's day also was filled with many voices. The immoral voices of his day were advertising their sinful lifestyle—do your own thing—as being the most fun, exciting and pleasurable. The foolish prophets of his day were speaking lies advertising wealth and riches, peace and safety, contentment and ease, but in reality they were producing only emptiness and spiritual poverty, uneasiness and a guilty conscience.

That is one of the reasons why Solomon wrote this book of wise sayings and directs it especially to the young. Throughout his book he is encouraging sons and daughters to listen to the voice of wisdom; to be obedient and faithful; to be sharing and kind.

In the first 8 chapters of his book Solomon encourages us to walk in the way of wisdom. In these chapters wisdom is personified as a woman, as we heard in our first Scripture reading. Foolishness, following the way of sin, is also personified as a woman, but an adulterous woman, a prostitute, one who sells herself. Those who become entrapped by her perish; while those who accept the invitation of wisdom and follow her will live. We read wisdom's invitation in 9:1-6: **WISDOM HAS BUILT HER HOUSE, SHE HAS HEWN OUT HER SEVEN PILLARS; SHE HAS SLAUGHTERED HER MEAT, SHE HAS MIXED HER WINE, SHE HAS ALSO FURNISHED HER TABLE. SHE HAS SENT OUT HER MAIDENS, SHE CRIES OUT FROM THE HIGHEST PLACES OF THE CITY, "WHOEVER IS SIMPLE, LET HIM TURN IN HERE!" AS FOR HIM WHO LACKS UNDERSTANDING, SHE SAYS TO HIM, "COME, EAT OF MY BREAD AND DRINK OF THE WINE I HAVE MIXED. FORSAKE FOOLISHNESS AND LIVE, AND GO IN THE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING.**

We read the invitation of foolishness in 9:13-18: **A FOOLISH WOMAN IS CLAMOROUS; SHE IS SIMPLE, AND KNOWS NOTHING. FOR SHE SITS AT THE DOOR OF HER HOUSE, ON A SEAT BY THE HIGHEST PLACES OF THE CITY, TO CALL TO THOSE WHO PASS BY, WHO GO STRAIGHT ON THEIR WAY: "WHOEVER IS SIMPLE, LET HIM TURN IN HERE"; AND AS FOR HIM WHO LACKS UNDERSTANDING, SHE SAYS TO HIM, "STOLEN WATER IS SWEET, AND BREAD EATEN IN SECRET IS PLEASANT." BUT HE DOES NOT KNOW THAT THE DEAD ARE THERE, THAT HER GUESTS ARE IN THE DEPTHS OF HELL.**

In chapter 9 Solomon declares that **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ONE IS UNDERSTANDING.**

Therefore, we see that wisdom is the way of faith in Christ while foolishness is the way of this world. Wisdom is living for Christ while foolishness is living for self.

The first thing Solomon says we should be concerned about is God's WORD: His Law & Gospel! For in these two great doctrines of God is embodied true wisdom. Solomon says to us **DO NOT FORGET MY LAW, BUT LET YOUR HEART KEEP MY COMMANDS**. We must not only learn to know God's Law—His commandments in our minds and hearts, by memorizing them, but especially we need to know them from the heart by living them. As Christians we see God's Law as a guide for us in our life of service to our Lord; the Law shows us what pleases God.

Yes, it always has the first and foremost purpose to condemn, to show us our sins and need of repentance and of a Savior from sin, but now as a redeemed, forgiven sinner the Law stands before us as a guide to our lives. How can we live in service to our heavenly Father; how can we live in loving gratitude to our Savior for all that He has done for us? By taking heed to His law, or as Solomon says by not forgetting His Law, by keeping it in our hearts and doing it in our lives. The fulfillment of the Law is LOVE. When we have true love for each other which stems from God's love for us then we are keeping, fulfilling God's Law.

The promise of a God-fearing life; of following after this wisdom of God's Law is length of days and peace. In other words a life of happiness and contentment living under God's blessings. The Lord through Solomon says: **FOR LENGTH OF DAYS AND LONG LIFE AND PEACE THEY WILL ADD TO YOU**.

But there is more, much more! Solomon says **MY SON,...LET NOT MERCY AND TRUTH FORSAKE YOU; BIND THEM AROUND YOUR NECK, WRITE THEM ON THE TABLET OF YOUR HEART**. Even as a woman in love will wear a necklace from her lover around her neck and over her heart to remember him by and to show her appreciation for the gift so also we will wear the love of God; God's gift of salvation. His promise of grace, mercy, forgiveness and life everlasting through Jesus Christ will be worn by us in our everyday life. People should be able to see by our actions and words that we are the bride of Christ, united to Him, belonging to Him and Him alone. We will wear our Christianity everyday, not just on Sundays.

Christ and His redemption will be our greatest treasure to our heart. Again comparing this to a loved one—that person gives her lover her heart. Christ is inscribed on our heart; for His blood covers us with His loving forgiveness. That is true wisdom; knowing, believing and then following God's ways, not man's.

If this is true in your life then Solomon says you will **TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND LEAN NOT ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING; IN ALL YOUR WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM, AND HE SHALL DIRECT YOUR PATHS**. True wisdom consists of listening to God, even when His Word goes against what we think is best. This is so unnatural for us to do. It is natural to lean on what we feel, what we understand, what we think and know. Human wisdom tells us to do what is most expedient for us whether that be lying, gossiping, slandering someone, fighting and arguing, getting an unscriptural divorce because of a bad marriage or an abortion from an unwanted pregnancy, or any other sinful option in order to escape some of life's unpleasant situations. Ultimately these human solutions are not solutions at all, but sinful, selfish actions.

Instead the child of God will trust in, lean on, and acknowledge the Lord. To trust Him is to commit our lives entirely to Him. To lean on Him means just that; we rely and lean on Him confident He won't pull away from us and let us fall flat on our face. Joshua and Caleb trusted the Lord and His promise of victory and did not lean on their own understanding when they scouted out the Promised Land and saw the large fortified cities and the powerful armies and people. They were the only ones who said, **LET US GO UP AT ONCE AND TAKE POSSESSION, FOR WE ARE WELL ABLE TO OVERCOME IT**. The rest relied on their own understanding and said, **THE PEOPLE WHO DWELL IN THE LAND ARE STRONG; THE CITIES ARE FORTIFIED AND VERY LARGE...WE ARE NOT ABLE TO GO UP AGAINST THE PEOPLE, FOR THEY ARE STRONGER THAN WE**. Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who were allowed to go into the Promised Land.

Solomon continues: **DO NOT BE WISE IN YOUR OWN EYES; FEAR THE LORD AND DEPART FROM EVIL.** Don't take pride in your own intelligence and wisdom. The Apostle Paul says that the highly intelligent of this world look upon God's Word and God's ways as foolishness, for they think they know better. Children, young adults—your education is important; but your education in Christ is **PRICELESS!** It is essential! Without it all that you know or will ever learn will be worthless. Paul called all worldly wisdom and earthly goods a pile of manure! Jesus said **WHAT DOES IT PROFIT A MAN IF HE GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD YET LOSE HIS OWN SOUL.**

If we live in this wisdom of God it will show in our proper use of the blessings God has given us. Is it wisdom to waste our blessings, our goods, our time on gambling, selfish luxuries, wasted moments of laziness? Solomon says that true wisdom will lead us to: **HONOR THE LORD WITH YOUR POSSESSIONS, AND WITH THE FIRSTFRUITS OF ALL YOUR INCREASE; SO YOUR BARNES WILL BE FILLED WITH PLENTY, AND YOUR VATS WILL OVERFLOW WITH NEW WINE.** In so doing we will be providing others not only with physical blessings but especially with the **ONE THING NEEDED!**

It is indeed true; that only what's done for the Lord will last. When our time, effort, energies and money goes to promoting the Word, to the preaching and teaching of Jesus and the spread of the Good News of Salvation through Christ alone we know that His Word will accomplish that for which it was sent, and people will be brought into God's Kingdom through faith in Jesus.

The Lord here promises us a very foolish thing, foolish at least to the reason of man. He says freely, willingly, lovingly give of your first fruits, honor Me with your wealth and your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine. The more we give, the Lord promises we will have. We certainly are mistaken if we feel we cannot afford to give to the Lord, or think that the more we give the less we'll have. The Lord Jesus did not let the poor widow who gave of her last 2 pennies starve; yet many millionaires die in spiritual starvation and poverty, because they did not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Finally, Solomon says **MY SON, DO NOT DESPISE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD, NOR DETEST HIS CORRECTION;** When we are disciplined, when the Lord allows bad things to come into our lives we are tempted to think that God must not love us or is against us and has forsaken us; then we need to remember these words of Solomon **FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CORRECTS, JUST AS A FATHER THE SON IN WHOM HE DELIGHTS.** Side by side with life's pleasures, come trials. They, too, are blessings from God. In our affliction, grief, sorrow, pain, trials and troubles we see God's love and mercy not His hatred and anger. He is only calling us ever closer to Him, teaching us patience and leading us to rely more and more upon His strength in His Word. He promises us His Fatherly care and protection will never be taken away from us.

This is **WISDOM!** It would do us all well to return home after church and after we have eaten our Sunday dinner, as a family to re-read these words as our after dinner devotion—write them in your hearts, write them in your children's hearts, listen to the voice of wisdom!

- 1) Remember God's Law—not only memorize His commandments but work at keeping His commandments out of love from the heart.
- 2) With repentant hearts look to God's promises of mercy and truth in Christ Jesus. For there is salvation in none other. His suffering, death and resurrection paid for all of our sins and is our only way to life.
- 3) Trust in Him and His Word with all your heart and lean not on your own reason and understanding.
- 4) Honor the Lord with your possessions and first fruits of your gifts of time, talents and treasures.
- 5) See God's love for you in your trials, troubles, setbacks and afflictions in life. The Lord God is but being that loving Father calling us closer to His side.

God's wisdom has revealed to us both young and old this simple truth that **Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so; Jesus loves me, He who died heaven's gate to open wide; He will wash away my sin, and let His little child come in.**

Amen.

That is simple wisdom from God!