

Worship at home
June 19, 2022
2nd Sunday after Pentecost



A Father's Advice

God calls us to worship:

Responsive reading: Psalm 42

Hymn: #338 "Let all things now living"

We offer our prayers:

Prayer of Praise and Supplication (*please remain standing*):

Creator God,

You have made a world of such amazing diversity –
with unique living things we cannot number,
in an interdependent pattern on which all life depends.

We praise you for such wonder.

You have created such amazing diversity in humankind –
through culture and language, custom and community,
expressed in creativity and compassion over and over again.

We praise you for such wonder.

In Jesus Christ, you show us how much you love your creation
and how we can live by your love.

By the power of your Spirit,

give us new eyes to behold the wonders you have made
and teach us how to share in the praise your creation offers you day by day.

****Please be seated.****

*If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)
Yet we know that nothing is able to separate us
from the love of God in Jesus Christ.
Let us, therefore, be free to confess our sins
before the God who is faithful and just. (1 John 1:9)*

Prayer of Confession (Unison):

**God of mercy;
As we gather to celebrate your gift of love
we recall the times when we forget you
and are divided one from the other.
How often our thoughts, our words, and our actions
have betrayed the goodness you have shown to us.
Forgive us.
Mend what is broken.
Heal the wounded relationships
that separate us from you,
from one another,
and which leave us divided within ourselves;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

God offers the assurance of grace:

To all who seek the mercy of the living God,
I say to you:
In Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

Accept the grace of God;
and be at peace with God,
at peace with one another,
at peace with your own self.

And give thanks to the Lord,
for He is good;
His love endures forever.
Amen.

We offer our lives and resources:

Offering plates are positioned as you enter and leave the sanctuary. If you'd prefer to use e-transfers, please speak with Rev. Ian, Judy Armstrong (St. Andrew's), or Howard McKellar (Knox)

God speaks to us:

Hymn: #494 "Lord, be thy word"

A Father's Advice

What images are conjured for you when you hear the phrase: “Living in the power of the Holy Spirit?”

Maybe some kind of mystical experience? A tangible awareness of communion with God – as when the thirsty deer finds the flowing streams? Maybe working miracles, or speaking in tongues, or unexplainable healings? By the Holy Spirit working through people of faith, the Lord does work these wonders in our age.

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is also wisdom.

In his farewell speech to his disciples, Jesus promised that:

the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.¹

Part of the Holy Spirit's ministry is to help Jesus' disciples learn, remember, and obey the wisdom that comes from his mouth by which we can live holy lives in the here-and-now even while Jesus sits on the throne of heaven instead of walking beside us.

Living in the power of the Holy Spirit involves seeking and abiding in Godly wisdom.

We have several books in our sacred library known as the Bible that represent the wisdom tradition. The most direct of these is the book of Proverbs.

The bulk of this 31-chapter book is chapters 10 to 29 which contain collections of 2- to 3- line sayings that are easy to read and memorize which convey wisdom for Holy Spirit-led, Godly living in a variety of situations.

This is what is a proverb. A proverb is a short, pithy statement, that often uses comparisons, or analogies, or metaphors to convey truth about some life circumstance.

For June and July, we'll be studying the collection of wisdom sayings known as the book of Proverbs.

¹ John 14:26-27

We won't go through the whole book. There is more in those 19 central chapters than can be absorbed in any one sitting or any series of sermons.

Instead, what I hope to accomplish is to provide you with enough background, organization, reference materials, and motivation to read, memorize, meditate on, and obey these proverbs for yourselves.

To that end, we'll focus on the first nine chapters which introduce the collection. So, let's begin:

READ PROVERBS 1:1, 8-9; 2:1-3:1

Whereas most of the psalms (which immediately precede the Proverbs in our Bible) are attributed to King David, most of the proverbs are attributed to his son, King Solomon. Whether or not Solomon actually composed all of the proverbs himself is up for debate. 1st Kings 4:32 records that Solomon composed 3,000 proverbs. Most of the true proverbs in our collection are found in chapters 10 through 29. This is the section of 1- to 2- line pithy statements. These 19 chapters contain 567 verses. So, with the typical ratio of one proverb to one verse, it could be that many of the proverbs in this collection are indeed Solomon's own compositions.

In any event, attributing the collection as a whole to Solomon lends authority to the wisdom contained therein.

Solomon was the last king of the united Israelite kingdom. He reigned from 971-931 BCE. with the reputation of possessing divine wisdom.

When he ascended the throne, after David, he was humbled by the magnitude of the task. So, he asked God for wisdom. Which God granted. In 1st Kings 3:11 we read:

God said to [Solomon], 'Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed, I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.'

Solomon went on to rule with great discernment, shrewdness, and care. His government excelled in business, justice, and building projects. Under Solomon's rule, Israel thrived economically and religiously. Solomon built the first, and perhaps most

glorious, temple in Jerusalem and helped to centralize the worship practices of the people of God. Such was his reputation for wisdom, and justice, and business acumen that the kings and queens of other nations came to seek his advice and to admire what the wisdom of God can accomplish. Later in 1st Kings we read that

The whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.²

However, Solomon was also a human being. He had a deep affection for women; particularly, for women of other nations, many of whom he married.

The issue of this is that God had forbade the Israelites from entering into marriage with people of these neighbouring nations. The concern was not about race or ethnicity, but rather that the other nations worshipped other gods. And if an Israelite were to marry someone who worshipped another god, the temptation would be to, at the least, blend worship practices.

As indeed happened.

Despite his devotion to Yahweh, Solomon began to build worship sites for the gods his wives worshipped within the boundaries of the Holy Nation of Israel. And soon, he began to worship at the altars of these foreign gods along with his wives, while also continuing to worship at the altar to Yahweh.

Solomon's heart was divided amongst the deities.

For all his wisdom, for all the wealth and reputation that God has secured for him through the wisdom God gave him, he failed in his own heart and mind to remain true to Yahweh.

The fear of the Lord is indeed the beginning of all wisdom, as we'll explore next week.

Soon the kingdom would be taken from Solomon marking the end of the United Kingdom. Israel divided into north (Israel) and south (Judah). Subsequent kings took the people further from God, until the northern kingdom ceased to be in 722 BCE, and the southern kingdom fell in 586 BCE, and the people of God were sent into exile.

² 1st Kings 10:24

The failure to follow the wisdom he taught brought injury not only to himself, but to the entire nation.

Living, as we do, in what's been termed a "cancel culture," we might be tempted to discard all of the Proverbs, to cancel out Solomon's legacy of wisdom on the grounds that their author failed to abide by them.

I want to encourage us instead to recognize that Solomon's personal struggles and flaws lend even *more* authority to the Proverbs as wise words for Godly living.

The collection has been put together as a conversation between a father and his son, in which the father is passing on proverbial advice to his son for how to live faithfully to God in the daily ordinariness of life.

We can imagine Solomon as a father, looking back over his own life, and encouraging his son to *not* make the same mistakes he did, and to continue his quest of thirsting after the Lord and seeking the wisdom that comes from God.

Perhaps, this is why so many of his proverbs are warnings against adultery and against the "loose woman", which can also be understood as the "foreign/strange woman"! It's not a warning against any ethnicity or nationality as much as it is against wavering in one's fidelity to Yahweh.

Solomon knew from bitter personal experience the injury one inflicts on oneself and those they love by ignoring the knowledge and understanding that comes from the mouth of God!

When we come to the Proverbs, we come not as children of Solomon, but as children of the heavenly Father, adopted by his grace through the sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth by which we live surrounded by His love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

As such, in the mystery of the Holy Spirit, the exhortation to "Hear, my child, your father's instruction" is the voice of the heavenly Father speaking to you and me.

In that attitude, our engagement with the book becomes a spiritual exercise in Father-child bonding as we sit with our heavenly Father to learn His advice to help us live godly lives in our quotidian experiences in everything from money management to aging; business dealings to marital fidelity; laziness to inner health; from habits of speech to relations with our neighbours.

The challenge is that there is no storyline. It is a collection of 100s of two- to three- line pithy sayings concerning a wide range of everyday issues. If you try and read it cover to cover as you might the Gospel of John or the book of Genesis, you're likely to fall asleep, or at the very least, your mind will wander! And, I don't think, beyond chapter 10, it's meant to be read this way.

I'm suggesting that a better way to approach these, dare I say the *spiritual* way, is in your private daily devotions believing that, through the Holy Spirit, the Father is speaking to you.

Come with no agenda apart from seeking to know God.

Sit down and peruse the verses as you might advertisements in a flyer.

[Example – chapter 12:1? 10? 11**]** As you do, ask the Holy Spirit to direct your eyes and trust the Spirit to guide your eyes to the proverb the Father needs you to hear today. Then, memorize those 2 or 3 lines and work out its meaning in your own context throughout the day.

The wonderful key to this encounter is that it doesn't require a lot of reading or research. It requires patience, prayer, and awareness of what the Spirit illuminates.

This is what I want to encourage us to do over the next 5 weeks:

Engage with the wisdom of the Proverbs believing that by the Holy Spirit, the Father in heaven is passing on this wisdom to you, His beloved child in the name of Jesus.

For the health of our souls, the good of our societies, and the glory of God.

Amen.

We respond with prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

God of the earth and all its peoples,
in Jesus Christ, you proclaimed the good news
that true life and peace are found in you.
Guide your church to proclaim this good news
not in ways that merely please people or don't ruffle feathers,
but in ways that bring Christ's reconciling love to divided communities
and lives out of joint with each other.
Shine your light into the world's hidden corners,
exposing violence, exploitation, bigotry.
Reveal what dehumanizes the vulnerable and degrades your creation.
God of the earth and all its peoples,
Let your light shine!

God of healing and hope,
We pray for all those who are ill or in pain,
for the anxious and discouraged,
for those facing death or the loss of someone dearly beloved,
and for those struggling to make ends meet in these uncertain times.
Keep a brief silence.

On this National Indigenous Sunday,
We pray for indigenous communities across this land.
Grant them wisdom and healing as they address the needs of their people.
Bring healing to those who remember painful experiences
and build bridges of understanding among us all.
Keep a brief silence.

We pray for Presbyterian World Service & Development and its partners
as they work to bring healing and hope to places of strife and deprivation.

Here add specific prayers for Ukraine and other places of need or unrest.

May the mission we share in Jesus' name shine the light of your love into desperate
lives.
God of the earth and all its peoples,
Let your light shine!

God of the faithful future,
bless this community of faith
and guide us as we plan for the future in changing times.
Bless students and teachers as another challenging school year ends
and lift the stress from their lives this summer.
Give us a time of rest and enjoyment in the summer months
and restore our hope and our energy to serve in your world.
God of the earth and all its peoples,

Let your light shine!

We offer all our prayers, spoken and unspoken,
through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to say together:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with God's blessing:

Hymn: #624 "Seek ye first"

Blessing: