

Sunday Service - Web
Avoch linked with Fortrose-Rosemarkie
15th Sunday after Pentecost
“Wisdom for Living: Proverbs 1-9”
(New Series)
“Gaining Wisdom for Life Today!”
Proverbs 1:1-9

Call to Worship

*All the earth, shout and sing for joy, for great in your midst is the Holy One!
‘Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and will not be afraid;
For the Lord God is my strength and my song, and has become my salvation.’*

CH4 441 Blessing and Honour and Glory and Power (Bonnie George Campbell)
- v1, v2, v3 & v5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Vh2oNZo4x4> (Instrumental)

Blessing and honour and glory and power,
wisdom and riches and strength evermore
give ye to him who our battle hath won,
whose are the kingdom, the crown, and the throne.

Into the heaven of the heaven hath he gone;
sitteth he now in the joy of the throne;
weareth he now of the Kingdom the crown;
singeth he now the new song with his own.

Soundeth the heaven of the heavens with his name;
ringeth the earth with his glory and fame;
ocean and mountain, stream, forest, and flower
echo his praises and tell of his power.

Ever ascendeth the song and the joy;
ever descendeth the love from on high;
blessing and honor and glory and praise—
this is the theme of the hymns that we raise.

Give we the glory and praise to the Lamb;
take we the robe and the harp and the palm;
sing we the song of the Lamb that was slain,
dying in weakness, but rising to reign.

Prayers of Approach & Lord’s Prayer

Merciful Lord
You created the universe out of love
We live only by Your grace and love
In Your image and likeness,
You created us to form relationships with others.
With thankful hearts, we worship You

Gracious God, you know us better than we know ourselves,
there are countless times that we have sinned against You and our neighbour.

Consciously or unconsciously,
through our words, attitudes, and actions,
we have broken our relationship with You,
with our neighbours and even with the environment.

Restore, oh gracious God, our broken relationships and guide us in Your paths.
For Your glory and the building of Your Kingdom

We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us when we pray to say:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. AMEN

2 – The heav'ns God's glory do declare [Psalm 19 - Scottish Psalter] (St. Andrew CH4 425) – v1, v2, v3 & v5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSITieFUoOc> (Instrumental)

The heav'ns God's glory do declare,
the skies his hand-works preach:
Day utters speech to day, and night
to night doth knowledge teach.

There is no speech nor tongue to which
their voice doth not extend:
Their line is gone through all the earth,
their words to the world's end.

In them he set the sun a tent;
Who, bridegroom-like, forth goes
From's chamber, as a strong man doth
to run his race rejoice.

From heav'n's end is his going forth,
circling to th' end again;
And there is nothing from his heat
that hidden doth remain.

God's law is perfect, and converts
the soul in sin that lies:
God's testimony is most sure,
and makes the simple wise.

Word of God

Bible Reading 1 – Ps 19:1-10

Psalm 19:1-10

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

¹ *The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

² *Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.*

³ *They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.*

⁴ *Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.*

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵ *It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.*

⁶ *It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.*

⁷ *The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.*

⁸ *The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.*

⁹ *The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring for ever.*

*The decrees of the LORD are firm,
and all of them are righteous.*

¹⁰ *They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;*

*they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb. © NIV*

3 - MP 447 Lord you are more precious than silver (More Precious) – v1, v2 & v3
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQ8sCAYzieE>

Follow lyrics on the screen

Word of God

Bible Reading 2 – Proverbs 1: 1-9

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

2 for gaining wisdom and instruction;

for understanding words of insight;

3 for receiving instruction in prudent behaviour,

doing what is right and just and fair;

4 for giving prudence to those who are simple,

knowledge and discretion to the young –

5 let the wise listen and add to their learning,

and let the discerning get guidance –

6 for understanding proverbs and parables,

the sayings and riddles of the wise.

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,

but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8 Listen, my son, to your father's instruction

and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

9 They are a garland to grace your head

and a chain to adorn your neck. © NIV

Sermon - "Gaining Wisdom for Life Today!"

Our first reading, Psalm 19 looks at the connections between God's created world which testifies to God and the written word – the law and its importance for our lives. (We shall see in chapter 8 that "wisdom" is described as playing a role in creation which will point us further towards the New Testament and God's purposes for creation.)

As Craig Bartholomew puts it "the ethical order of Proverbs 1-9 is grounded in the creation order by Wisdom who accompanied God as he set the cosmic boundaries." Creation is ordered by God's wisdom. The idea of creation is important for understanding Proverbs: "scholars began to realize that Israel's wisdom is not secular but rooted in a doctrine of creation." (He means by this that it did not emerge from a religious editing of secular ideas as some had suggested but started from an entirely different source and starting-point).

God's world – God's creation, we could say (with all its possibilities and yet its boundaries) – these boundaries include our physical being and the limits of the world around us. Think for example the many implications of "gravity" for health (with its life and death implications), or for travel; or think of the importance of the "atmosphere" and "the natural resources" found in the earth and the oceans; as well as the creatures from insects to whales that we share our context – both the natural world and the creatures within it are often a source of inspiration in the Wisdom literature.

The creation is the context for human life – life that is viewed as having two essential trajectories – a life oriented towards **wisdom** or a life that heads towards **folly** ...

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

- ² *for gaining wisdom and instruction;
for understanding words of insight;*
- ³ *for receiving instruction in prudent behaviour,
doing what is right and just and fair;*
- ⁴ *for giving prudence to those who are simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young –*

We can see the **uses** of wisdom in these verses above. The book of Proverbs and the proverbs contained within it lead to wisdom – it forms our thinking and our way of looking at the world. It leads to instruction in prudent behaviour, doing what is right and just and fair and is aimed especially at young adults (with those younger and older looking on and reflecting on that key phase of life in the future and in the past) to gain more wisdom for now!

Little wonder that one biblical writer says that: “Wisdom in the Old Testament is about how to negotiate life successfully in God’s *good but fallen* world”

- ⁵ *let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance –*

Human life then is lived in the tussle between wisdom and folly. “Wisdom” – as found in the literature in the bible including the book of Proverbs, is a world created in our “imagination” in our minds and our thinking that connects to our everyday lives. The metaphors of the opening of the book of Proverbs 1-9 are all about contrasts:

- 1) the call of wisdom and the call of folly - leading to
- 2) the two ways or paths; as exemplified by
- 3) the two women – Lady Wisdom and Madam Folly - pointing to
 - 3b) the two houses and
 - 3c) the two invitations to dine.

The book invites us to imagine **our** travel plans:

Which way will **we** go? What direction will **we** choose?

What will the end of young adulthood look like – a journey to wisdom or a journey to folly?

What about the destination of “later life”? (Our theme in recent weeks.)

These are not philosophical questions or just issues of “theology”: they are all about everyday living.

- ⁶ *for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.*

God’s world – creation (with its possibilities and boundaries) – is the context for human life – with two possibilities – a life oriented towards wisdom or towards folly. But we come into the worlds with minds and bodies (the hardware) of human existence; the software of wisdom and understanding needs to be worked out. In that sense to journey for wisdom is open-ended.

- ⁷ *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

This phrase comes at the beginning and the ending of Proverbs and clearly frames the composition of the book (1:7 and 31:30).

The phrase – “the fear of the LORD ...” needs to be understood in context. The fear of God is – “a sense of God as God” of God as “Yahweh.” Remember Exodus 3 & 6 that we reflected on two years ago – the LORD (Yahweh) is “I am who I am”; the one who redeems his people from the slavery of Egypt and leads them to the promised land – metaphors that transfer easily to the New Testament.

We can see from all of this that this idea of “the fear of the Lord” is the bedrock on which the book of Proverbs is built – if we depart from this foundation then we will lose the way to wisdom. This idea of God as Yahweh (LORD) - assumed through the book. Viewed in those terms, Lady Wisdom an important figure in the book of Proverbs as we shall see – is in some senses “the personification” of the wisdom of the LORD of Yahweh.

Bartholomew summarises the implications of all of this succinctly:

“If we want to know how to understand and live successfully in the world then we must begin with Yahweh and be in right relationship with him. To be wise we must root our life and thought here. The fear of the Lord is also the beginning of wisdom in the sense that it represents the start of a journey of exploration and discovery which is creation-wide. For Proverbs, faith is not a closed package delivered once and for all. Education and exploration of all life follow on from this foundation and beginning.”

⁸ *Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

⁹ *They are a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.*

The book of proverbs is primarily aimed at young people – we could say adolescents or young adults in our context. The words are designed as parents (father and mother) making speeches to an adolescent (in its time aimed especially at young men).

The speeches highlight the conflict in a fallen world between contrasting choices or paths:

wisdom / evil
righteousness / wickedness

Also between contrasting kinds of people:

the blessed/ the wicked
the wise/ the fool.

Today, our postmodern world is a world of radical pluralism - a world of flux and change. One current example of how rapidly things change would be for example, the identity debate. Where debate is in itself an “ironic” word for the kinds of shrill individualistic, lobby-centred pronouncements that often draw little on the wisdom of the centuries. “Civil society” at its most “uncivil” ...

The biblical view of wisdom is more “exclusive” than “pluralist” – the foundation, the bedrock is God, God’s created world and God’s intention for humanity. But the search for wisdom is open-ended and takes human beings into the world around us – expressed in the Old Testament in the study of the natural world – in our own day the “disciplines” of study in the modern world – science, the arts and humanities,

medicine, law, social science, politics, the media and so on. As Christians we need to be able to connect to our traditions to the world around us; and we need to model that to the younger generation as well.

⁵ *let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance –*

⁷ *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge ...*

To summarise, the search for wisdom begins with God and his creation and God's plan for creation – but it is open-ended and we need to be ready to seek for truth through wisdom and connect it to our lives and the world in which we live.

4 - CH4 686 How happy are all they who hear (St Stephen – Newington) (Scottish Paraphrase - Prov. 3) – v1, v2, v3, v4 & v5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6CiWsjhRcU>

O happy is the man who hears
Instruction's warning voice;
And who celestial Wisdom makes
His early, only choice.

For she has treasures greater far
Than east or west unfold;
And her rewards more precious are
Than all their stores of gold.

In her right hand she holds to view
A length of happy days;
Riches with splendid honours joined
Are what her left displays.

She guides the young with innocence,
In pleasure's paths to tread,
A crown of glory she bestows
Upon the hoary head.

According as her labours rise,
So her rewards increase;
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercessions

Loving and gracious God,
we come before You to give thanks for what You have done for us.
We celebrate Your Name and offer You praise because of Your Holiness,
yet You are a living God in whom we trust and believe.
We thank You, God, for the rainy season and for health.
Oh God, we thank You for the life we have,
for the air we breathe
and for our relationships with those who are both close and far away.
We thank You for Your infinite goodness,
which deepens our trust in You.

God of mercy, increase our faith
so that we may develop a deeper understanding of You
and a deeper relationship with You.
We pray for our broken world and for peace.
We pray for the children of all nations,
We pray for men and women longing to be reunited with their families.
We pray for an end to racism and that there be a greater realisation that we are all
your children and should live in harmony

We pray for new ways to create closer relationships with God and others.
We pray that you would empower us all
to build loving and supportive relationships that reflect the image and likeness of God

We pray for our local congregations as presbytery review their plan in the light of
instruction from the Church of Scotland in relation to the future number of ministers.
We pray for the safety of all living in the Black Isle and throughout our country as the
number of Covid 19 case significantly increase.
We commend to your fatherly goodness all who are anxious or distressed in mind or
body; comfort and relieve them in their need; give them patience in their sufferings,
and bring good out of all their troubles.
These things we ask in Jesus name Amen

**5 – MP 1078 Jesus is Lord - the cry that echoes through creation (Echoes
through Creation) – v1, v2 & v3**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJaOeqigPq4>

Sending

The LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose way of life is blameless,
for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones. © NIV

6 – CH4 810 Sing to the Lord of Heaven and Earth (Gonfalon Royal) – verse
<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/hymn/810-sing-to-the-lord-of-heaven-and-earth>

Sing to the Lord of Heaven and earth,
Whom angels serve and saints adore,
the Father, Son and Spirit blest
To whom be praise for evermore. Ame

Benediction

May the Lord help you to live wisely and in peace.
May the Son guide your path.
May the Holy Spirit lead you into wisdom
Now may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all, AMEN.

We are using materials from Weekly Worship.