

**Sunday Service - Web**  
**Avoch linked with Fortrose-Rosemarkie**  
**17th Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Wisdom for Living: Proverbs 1-9**  
**Proverbs 1: 20-33 / Job 28:1-12; 14, 22-24 & 28**  
**““Finding wisdom: turn your ear, cry aloud - look and search!”**

**Welcome – VOLUNTARY**

Call to Worship – words of the Psalmist:

Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all who live in this world, both low and high, rich and poor alike:

My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the meditation of my heart will give you understanding.

I will turn my ear to a proverb; with the harp I will expound my riddle. © NIV

**1 - CH4 181(i) MP 152** For the beauty of the earth (Lucerna Laudoniae) – v1-5  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVyN7Qi7NHs> (Follow the lyrics on the screen)

**Prayers of Approach/ Confession/ Lord's**

**APPROACH**

Lord, we come again to this place

Where you are ae worshiped.

We come to gather up all we have said and done and thought since last we met

And bring it as part of our offering of thanks and praise.

We have come to seek your truth, to praise your glory

And to allow the light of your love to drive the darkness out of our lives.

**CONFESSION (we come to a time of confession)**

Lord God, as we come into your presence and power

grant us faith and confidence that here broken lives are made whole.

**SILENCE (as we confess our sins)**

**ABSOLUTION**

In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name, AMEN.

**COLLECT**

Lord of creation, whose glory is around and within us:

open our eyes to your wonders, that we may serve you with reverence

and know your peace at our lives' end, 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 - Ps 49 (Alt)** Hear this, all ye peoples, hear (Ferrier)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EHtiNn19Kw> (follow the lyrics on the screen)

## **Word of God**

### **Bible Reading 1 – Job 28:1-12; 14, 22-24 & 28**

Job 28:1-12; 14, 22-24 & 28

There is a mine for silver

and a place where gold is refined.

2 Iron is taken from the earth,  
and copper is smelted from ore.

3 Mortals put an end to the darkness;  
they search out the farthest recesses  
for ore in the blackest darkness.

4 Far from human dwellings they cut a shaft,  
in places untouched by human feet;  
far from other people they dangle and sway.

5 The earth, from which food comes,  
is transformed below as by fire;

6 lapis lazuli comes from its rocks,  
and its dust contains nuggets of gold.

7 No bird of prey knows that hidden path,  
no falcon's eye has seen it.

8 Proud beasts do not set foot on it,  
and no lion prowls there.

9 People assault the flinty rock with their hands  
and lay bare the roots of the mountains.

10 They tunnel through the rock;  
their eyes see all its treasures.

11 They search the sources of the rivers  
and bring hidden things to light.

12 But where can wisdom be found?  
Where does understanding dwell?

14 The deep says, 'It is not in me';  
the sea says, 'It is not with me.'

22 Destruction and Death say,  
'Only a rumour of it has reached our ears.'

23 God understands the way to it  
and he alone knows where it dwells,

24 for he views the ends of the earth  
and sees everything under the heavens.

28 And he said to the human race,  
'The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom,  
and to shun evil is understanding.'

**3 - CH4 232** Pears and Apples (Pears and Apples)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n42cDsPI-E> (Follow the lyrics on the screen)

See especially verses 3 onwards - "Deep beneath the Ocean floor"

## **Word of God**

### **Bible Reading 2 – Proverbs 2:1-11**

#### **Sermon: "Finding Wisdom: turn your ear, cry aloud - look and search!"**

If chapter one was about the efforts of wisdom to make herself heard – this chapter has the opposite focus. We the hearers of the scriptures are the ones who are to make an effort. Here we have to go out and look for wisdom – realising that when we find wisdom, we are coming across real treasure.

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,  
2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding –  
3 indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,

The title of our sermon picks up key words – turn your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding. We are to make an effort with our whole being – our ears and hearts – even our voices to match the "clamour" of wisdom in the public places. We are to call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding. In other words, we have to put our hearts into it.

That's not to say that wisdom, of course, that we invent wisdom – we've talked about the open-ended nature of biblical wisdom – that once found and imbibed or inculcated, it has to be applied – it can be applied across our lives to the areas that interest us and to the spheres of life – education, work or even retirement in which we find ourselves. But wisdom comes from God and God, as we've seen knows the way to it.

God's word reveals the contours of wisdom to us and gives us practical pointers – the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God – very practical – life defining elements of wisdom. So much so that Atkinson can say:

"The summons to hear Wisdom is really a summons to hear God. The hearers are called to discern God's presence in the world, and give attention to it, not only in the special times or when God is, so to speak, "public" but at all times even when God is hidden.

4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,  
5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.  
The imagery of Job is reflected in these verses – looking and searching with all the energy and perseverance and hopefulness as miners in the earth looking for precious metals or for energy sources – like hidden treasure! Here wisdom is seen clearly as treasure – as a rarity to be sought – all these verbs - looking and searching – are about the hunt for wisdom. As we've seen this echoes

6 For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.  
7 He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose way of life is blameless, 8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Knowledge is a fascinating topic! Recently, the OECD report on the Scottish Curriculum of Excellence (2021) offered a review and critique of “knowledge” in educational terms: early on they talk about “the kind of knowledge, skills and attitudes students need to progress as learners.” Later they look more analytically into 1) disciplinary knowledge, 2) interdisciplinary knowledge and even more exciting things like 3) epistemic knowledge not to mention 4) procedural knowledge!

The OECD panel make many fascinating points about knowledge and how well they think the Scottish curriculum is dealing with that – but knowledge is not just about technique or even content – knowledge is about the way we orientate our lives. The biblical view starts with how knowledge is connected to God – though it recognises, implicitly as we see in the review of the created world and the creatures in it - the other kinds of knowledge that feed into this. Kidner notes that the ideas of knowledge and understanding are connected to the idea of being able to “discern” and to “discern between.” In other words, divine knowledge and understanding are a foundation for being discriminating in life – whether in our thoughts or in our deeds. The endpoint is this: success in store for the upright.

Kidner further makes the point that such discrimination leads into the application of wisdom in practical life – we sometimes use a French word “savoir-faire” to talk about this. This “hands-on” approach points to ideas like sound sense and effectiveness hence the translation “success.” The life that is shaped by God’s knowledge and understanding will give practical wisdom for living.

God is a shield to those whose way of life is blameless, 8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way 9 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair – every good path.

Note the way in which the directions of our life and God’s shepherding. The late Denis Burkitt was a surgeon and the man behind our deeper understanding of the role of “fibre” in our diet. As an engineering student his capacities were apparently fairly modest but finding faith and turning to medicine, he was remarkable. He received recognition in two different areas - one for a tumour named after him and secondly about the impact of “fibre” in diet on our health. Using very hands-on approaches to issues: with “geography” a factor in one study; and the laborious measurement of human “stool samples” featuring in another. His knowledge applied to practical wisdom led to genuinely astonishing outcomes.

10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

11 Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

This section underlines these two elements again – the path of wisdom, the framing character of wisdom. “The process is that wisdom and knowledge, when they become your own way of thinking and your acquired taste ...”

### **Application**

As we think about today’s two passages on wisdom - Job 28 and Proverbs 2, there is a theme running through them – this urgent question: “Where is wisdom to be found?” The birds, the beasts of the field are unaware, the deep and even Abaddon (the underworld) and Death can only say, “We have heard a rumour of it ...” One theologian who is anxious to connect theology to life, David Ford, is concerned that Christians in today’s world urgently need to discover again biblical wisdom in and through their contexts of faith – by applying themselves to finding out more about the

bible and their faith. Speaking at his inaugural lecture as a Professor at Cambridge he said:

“I see the most important item on the theological agenda at present being the education ... for living in truth and wisdom. As traditional habits and support for faith weaken in the society generally ... if Christians are to be more than tourists (emphasis mine) in relation to their traditions then there needs to be ordered learning of them and of their contemporary significance.” D Ford ...

Our search for wisdom needs to begin with God, God’s word, and God’s world (creation) but we need to connect it to the Christian faith handed down to us and to our own everyday lives. We are not to be “tourists” to our Christian tradition – that’s a great phrase! We need to really find wisdom and the knowledge of God – we need to turn our ears to God’s word, and to cry aloud – to look and search for wisdom!”

**4 – MP 1022** Above all powers (All Powers)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6cifVFVP7s> (Follow the lyrics on the screen)

## **Response to the Word of God**

### **We Gaze into the Heavens (Psalm 36:5-10)**

We gaze into the heavens, Lord,  
and wonder at the reach of your enduring love.

We make shapes out of the clouds, Lord,  
and marvel at the many ways you show us you are faithful.

We stand in the shadow of the mountain, Lord,  
and recognise that your righteousness is solid as a rock

We plumb the depths of the sea, Lord  
and see that the wisdom behind your judgement is so much deeper, still.

People and beasts, alike, our lives are in your hands.  
You are life. Our life.

So, we watch the light bounce off of diamonds, Lord,  
and find that your enduring love is worth so much more.

We tremble at what threatens to destroy us,  
and find refuge in the shelter of your wings.

We fight for what we need, for our daily bread,  
and find a feast in the wealth of your house.

We thirst for what refreshes,  
and find a flood of delights in the river of your love.

For you are a fountain.  
For you are a light.  
And you are life. Our life.

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## **5 - Speak O Lord (Speak O Lord)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tPp8ov7cks> (Follow the lyrics on the screen)

### **Prayers for Others and Ourselves**

Heavenly Father thank you for your great love and blessing over our lives. Thank you that your favour has no end, but it lasts for our entire lifetime. Forgive us for sometimes forgetting that you are intimately acquainted with all our ways, that you know what concerns us, and you cover us as with a shield.

We ask that we walk in your blessing and goodness today. That your face would shine on us. That you would open the right doors for our lives and for our loved ones, that you would close the wrong doors and protect us from those we need to walk away from.

Establish the work of our hands and bring to fulfilment all that you have given us to do in these days. We pray that you would make our way purposeful and our footsteps firm out of your goodness and love. Give us a heart of wisdom to hear your voice and make us strong by your huge favour and grace.

We pray for justice in the world

We pray for the Asian-Pacific region – new pacts and new challenges in that part of the world – pray for regional leaders and the need for diplomacy

We pray for the Sahara and West African region and the problems of terrorism and violence that affect the lives of millions

We pray also for Lebanon where they face acute shortages of water, fuel, medicines and food and pray that the new government will bring some stability and order.

We pray for our churches at home and abroad

We pray for the work of Mission India and all those who work to spread your truth throughout the world.

We pray for those in the world who are hungry and suffering

We remember Christian Aid agencies like Tear Fund who seek to share resources;

We pray, that we might have the will to reorder our lives, that all may have their rightful share of the food, medical care, and shelter, and so have the necessities of a life of dignity.

We pray that you would strengthen this congregation in its work and worship. Nourish us with Your Word and sacraments that we may faithfully minister in Your name,

and witness to Your love and grace for all the world.

Fill our hearts with Your self-giving love, that our voices may speak Your praise, and our lives may conform to the image of Your Son.

We pray for our own community as the number of Covid cases has risen dramatically.

We pray for all those involved in the Health Service and social care in this time of high dependence and stress.

We remember those in our congregations who reach out and care for others in times of need.

We pray for our community where there is brokenness and pain.  
For the sick and bereaved that they may know encouragement.

May we always look to You  
As the one who gives us life.  
All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Sending**

But where can wisdom be found?  
Where does understanding dwell?  
God understands the way to it  
and he alone knows where it dwells,  
for he views the ends of the earth  
and sees everything under the heavens. © NIV

**6 – CH4 798** The peace of the earth be with you (La Paz de la Tierra) – verse  
<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/hymn/798-the-peace-of-the-earth-be-with-you>  
The link will take you to the Church of Scotland web site where you will have a choice of accompaniment

### **Benediction**

Lord God  
may we know the limits of our humanness  
and learn to lean on the limitlessness of God,  
may we be wise enough to trust not our own wisdom,  
but the wisdom of God.  
Now may the Lord bless you and keep you,  
may the Lord make God's face to shine upon you  
and be gracious unto you,  
may the Lord lift up God's countenance upon you  
and give you peace and wisdom all your days. Amen.

We are using materials from Weekly Worship and Engage Worship