

Sunday Service - Web
Avoch linked with Fortrose-Rosemarkie
18th Sunday after Pentecost
Wisdom for Living: Proverbs 1-9
Proverbs 3:1-8 & Proverbs 3:9-16

“Wisdom and our value systems: learning to trust in God whole-heartedly”

Call to Worship

I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. ©NIV

1 CH4 167 / MP 201 - Guide me O thou great Redeemer (Cym Rhondda)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3NmfmVGblw>
(Copy and paste the link and follow lyrics on the screen)

Prayers of Approach/ Confession/ Lord’s Prayer

APPROACH

Holy God, Maker of All,
we come to You in worship
offering our praise and prayer
in wonder at all You have made.
With all creation our voices rise to You
and proclaim Your enduring faithfulness.
Come to us in the power of Your life-giving Spirit
and enliven our hearts and minds
to respond in faith and trust
to the knowledge of Your love and grace.

CONFESSION (we come to a time of confession)

Lord God, we are mindful of our limitations, conscious of sin and the way it separates
us from you and from our neighbour

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

Gracious God, you call us to fullness of life:
deliver us from unbelief and banish our anxieties
with the liberating love of 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 - Psalm 121 - I to the hills will lift mine eyes (French CH4 81(i))

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJsDa-6l90Q>

(Copy and paste the link and follow lyrics on the screen)

Word of God

Bible Reading 1 – Proverbs 3:1-8

*My son do not forget my teaching,
but keep my commands in your heart,
2 for they will prolong your life many years
and bring you peace and prosperity.*

*3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them round your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

*4 Then you will win favour and a good name
in the sight of God and man.*

*5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;*

*6 in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.*

*7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.*

*8 This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones. © NIV*

3 - MP 302 – I want to walk with Jesus Christ (Walk with Jesus)

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

(Copy and paste the link and follow lyrics on the screen)

Word of God

Bible Reading 2 – Proverbs 3:9-16

*9 Honour the LORD with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops;*

*10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing,
and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

*11 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline,
and do not resent his rebuke,*

*12 because the LORD disciplines those he loves,
as a father the son he delights in.*

*13 Blessed are those who find wisdom,
those who gain understanding,*

*14 for she is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.*

*15 She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.*

*16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honour. © NIV*

Sermon: “Wisdom and our value systems: learning to trust in God wholeheartedly”

There are two things that we are to do in the verses that conclude our first reading - each of which has a consequence for our lives:

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding;*

⁶ *in all your ways submit to him ...*

Consequence

and he will make your paths straight.

The idea of submit here takes in the idea of “fellowship” with God – sharing life’s path with God (like the NT metaphor of the good shepherd – who sets the flock on their way).

Secondly

⁷ *Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.*

Consequence

⁸ *This will bring health to your body*

and nourishment to your bones.

In both cases we are encouraged to be cautious about the limits of our own strength and understanding (in human terms). Contrasting our mortal capacity with God’s divine wisdom. Verses 7 – 8 point the way towards how in our inner lives - our minds and wills need to be turned to God – but this will enliven and invigorate us even at the level of our physical being.

¹¹ *My son, do not despise [reject] the LORD’s discipline,*

and do not resent his rebuke,

¹² *because the LORD disciplines those he loves,*

as a father the son he delights in.

Kidner points out that we tend to reject hardships and discipline because we resent the impact they have on us; but as verse 5 has talked about trusting God – we need to learn patience and allow God to mould us through circumstances and difficulties.

Resilience is a much-vaunted word in today’s context. We can only build resilience through response and facing up to trials and difficulties. For the “snowflake generation” whether the word is fair or not – the term tends to imply a culture that expects or hopes that life will be easy – generally it isn’t. As the pandemic has reminded us “normal life” is filled with pitfalls. In a talk to artists, a Christian psychiatrist was explaining that if we expect life to go smoothly, we’re starting from the wrong assumption! We should expect trials, difficulties, even suffering ... (Very pertinent for artists, but relevant for us all.)

In the secular sphere, as well, wise voices are aware of the role of discipline. On YouTube, an Admiral Mcraven in America has given a fascinating “motivational” talk about the discipline of marine (‘Seal’) training: “What starts here changes the world ...” And he shows that it will be strenuous: “In the struggle to move forward ...” there will be challenges. He makes it clear that there are many, many hurdles and difficulties that will shake people to their physical and mental core. He ends his talk by saying this: “Finally in ‘Seal’ training there’s a bell, a big brass bell that hangs in the centre of the compound for all to see ... All you have to do to quit, all you have to do to quit ... is ring the bell.” His point is simple – are you the sort of person who bows out - the sort of person who rings the bell? Or are you the sort of person who will persevere and learn from the strenuous discipline of the training? For the Admiral, only the latter sort of person will “change the world”!

For the Christian, God's discipline in our lives is to stretch and develop us to give us the character that is ready to face the world in whatever situation God places us. For most of us by the time we've finished school, even, we'll face challenges. As life goes on, we have to ask this: are we able in our life of faith to accept the ways that God shapes us, to learn from them and to move on so that we can live more fully and serve more able? There is much to be done in God's world – whether we go to the ends of the earth or start in our own back yard.

Going back to verses 9 & 10 we're taken to the material sphere, but a comparison is made between this and the value of wisdom in v13-15.

⁹ *Honour the LORD with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops;*
¹⁰ *then your barns will be filled to overflowing,
and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

Again, the focus is on right perspective. We are to recognise God's sovereignty in our lives even in our wealth – a right perspective here will bring blessing – we are not to hold back from giving to God.

This is explained in Leviticus 23:

The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "When you enter the land, I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the Lord so it will be accepted on your behalf ...

You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. (Lev 23:10-11 & 14.)

The model of the first-fruits asks us the people of God in the Old Testament to think – do you recognise that your wealth and resources come from God? Reading this verse today, we're encouraged to ask: where do our priorities lie? Do we order our lives with God at the centre drawing wisdom and strength from God and ordering our values around God's character.

Application – Wisdom and our Value Systems

The final verses summarise on the relative value of God's wisdom when measured against the precious stones and treasures that were at the heart of the metaphor of the preciousness of wisdom that we thought about last week.

¹³ *Blessed are those who find wisdom,
those who gain understanding,*
¹⁴ *for she is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.*
¹⁵ *She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.*

So, for the book of Proverbs - the "real" treasure in life is wisdom – echoing the words of Job – "nothing you desire can compare with her."

- ⇒ What do we value in life?
- ⇒ How do we balance the "treasures of the world?" against the values of wisdom?
- ⇒ Have we found true wisdom, and do we realise its immense value?
- ⇒

For the book of Proverbs such treasure – the treasure of wisdom brings further blessings in her wake. ¹⁶ *Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour.*

4 – As those of old their first-fruits brought (Forest Green CH4 304)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXcBZ3F0EaA>
(Copy and paste the link and follow lyrics on the screen)

Prayers of thanksgiving and for Others and Ourselves

Generous, loving, and life-giving God
we thank You for the precious gift of this world
and for the glory of the creation in which it is set.
We thank You for sustaining us in life
and nurturing us each day of our lives
as we grow in faith and commitment
to the good news of Jesus Christ

We thank You for Your word in Scripture
in poetry and prophecy and law,
and the living Word who is Jesus Christ,
One with You in the beginning
through whom all things were made.

We thank You for Your Holy Spirit
that brings us to new life in Christ,
leading and inspiring us
to bear witness to Your
goodness, glory and love.

We pray for the world
We pray for those who challenge injustice, exploitation and persecution

We pray for all who have been forced to leave their homes by the earthquake in
Australia and the volcanic eruption in La Palma.
We commend to your care those too who are fleeing Haiti and Belarus may they be
kept safe

We pray too for the situation in Ukraine where the President's aide has survived an
assassination attempt.

We give thanks that Somalis in Mogadishu have been able to watch a film in their
main cinema again for the first time in thirty years.
We give thanks for churches who are speaking out, challenging injustice, exploitation
and persecution

We pray for guidance for all who are involved in preparing for the Climate
Conference which will take place during November.

We pray that the World Health Organisation's recent guidance on minimising air
pollution will receive universal approval

We pray for the church at work in the world
We pray for the Church of Scotland following up with Presbyteries and the many
visits that are taking place in the Presbytery of Ross in the coming weeks – including
our own congregation.

We pray that you will guide us that we may achieve all that you have planned for us.

We pray for our own community as the number of Covid cases has risen dramatically
The schools returned and the University returning – for youngsters at all stages of life

We pray for those who are ill who are bereaved – some in very recent days;
for those with chronic medical conditions

We pray for all who may be finding life difficult as the pressures of events beyond
their control close in on them. Direct us to those in need and help us provide a kindly
act or word where needed.

We pray for ourselves, cause us to know your will, and to hear your voice saying:
“This is the way, walk in it”. Enable us to exchange needless worry for that peace
which passes all understanding, by taking everything to you in prayer in Jesus’ name
AMEN

5 - My Heart Is Filled with Thankfulness

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhiXc30RR_s

(Copy and paste the link and follow lyrics on the screen)

Sending

The ways of wisdom are pleasant ways,
and all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her;
those who hold her fast will be blessed. © NIV

6 – CH4 800 Send me Lord (Thuma Mina)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KYkaAMuigg>

(Copy and paste the link and follow lyrics on the screen)

Benediction

Lord God send us into the world to walk in your ways.
lead us in your paths to follow in Christ's footsteps
and fill us with your Holy Spirit.

And now may the blessing of God almighty
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with you now and for evermore.
Amen.

We are using materials from Weekly Worship