

Sunday Service - Web
Avoch linked with Fortrose-Rosemarkie
3rd Sunday before Advent
Wisdom for Living: Proverbs 1-9
Proverbs 1-5 & 12-21 & 8:22-36
“Wisdom and creation – tracing a path to life”

Welcome – VOLUNTARY

Call to Worship – words of the Psalmist:

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ©NIV

1 - CH4 124 Praise to the Lord the almighty the king of Creation (Lobe Den Herren)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCnQNwQG5GI>

Prayers of Approach/ Confession/ Lord’s Prayer

God, You are the Maker of the heavens and all that dwells there.
God, You are the Maker of all the earth and all that dwells there.
God, You are the Maker of the oceans and seas and all that dwells there.

***And so, we worship You, with all of our heart,
all of our mind and all of our strength.***

All that we know was made by Your hands
All that we know and yet also, so much more:
the farthest reaches of Heavens that are even now, still unfolding
the secrets of the Earth still hidden from our knowing
the depths of the oceans from which all life came.

***And so, we worship You, with all of our heart,
all of our mind and all of our strength.***

Mighty and powerful, before all things,
and beyond all things
yet always a God who is faithful to all creation.
Faithful in love. Faithful to save.
Faithful to tend. Faithful to share.

***And so, we worship You, with all of our heart,
all of our mind and all of our strength.***

CONFESSION (we come to a time of confession)

Almighty God — creator, shaper and sustainer of all life,
We confess that we have not loved you with our whole hearts;
We have been careless with the creation you so lovingly crafted,
And deaf to its song of praise.
We have taken to satisfy our selfish desires, rather than our need
And been indifferent to the consequences

As your world's song of praise has been silenced.
Because of our greed and carelessness, the world is hurting,
Please forgive our indifference.
SILENCE (as we confess our sins)

ABSOLUTION

Thank you for the forgiveness won for us by your Son – the redeemer of all creation.
We receive your grace to us, and your love for us as we are.
Change us now into what you would have us be –
Move us to love and care for your world
And make us ready to work for the good of all creation
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 – Loved before the dawn of time (Salvation's Song)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv8JCG3noJ0>

Word of God

Bible Reading 1

Proverbs 8:22-36

²² *"The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works,
before his deeds of old;*

²³ *I was formed long ages ago,
at the very beginning, when the world came to be.*

²⁴ *When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,
when there were no springs overflowing with water;*

²⁵ *before the mountains were settled in place,
before the hills, I was given birth,*

²⁶ *before he made the world or its fields
or any of the dust of the earth.*

²⁷ *I was there when he set the heavens in place,
when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,*

²⁸ *when he established the clouds above
and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,*

²⁹ *when he gave the sea its boundary
so the waters would not overstep his command,
and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.*

³⁰ *Then I was constantly at his side.
I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in his presence,*

³¹ *rejoicing in his whole world
and delighting in mankind.*

- ³² *“Now then, my children, listen to me;
blessed are those who keep my ways.*
- ³³ *Listen to my instruction and be wise;
do not disregard it.*
- ³⁴ *Blessed are those who listen to me,
watching daily at my doors,
waiting at my doorway.*
- ³⁵ *For those who find me find life
and receive favour from the LORD.*
- ³⁶ *But those who fail to find me harm themselves;
all who hate me love death.”*

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3 – CH4 143 Who put the colours in the rainbow (Audrey Green)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCNABdFiK64>

Word of God

Bible Reading 2 – Proverbs 8:1-5 & 12-21

- ¹ *Does not wisdom call out?
Does not understanding raise her voice?*
- ² *At the highest point along the way,
where the paths meet, she takes her stand;*
- ³ *beside the gate leading into the city,
at the entrance, she cries aloud:*
- ⁴ *“To you, O people, I call out;
I raise my voice to all mankind.*
- ⁵ *You who are simple, gain prudence;
you who are foolish, set your hearts on it.*
- ¹² *“I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence;
I possess knowledge and discretion.*
- ¹³ *To fear the LORD is to hate evil;
I hate pride and arrogance,
evil behavior and perverse speech.*
- ¹⁴ *Counsel and sound judgment are mine;
I have insight, I have power.*
- ¹⁵ *By me kings reign
and rulers issue decrees that are just;*
- ¹⁶ *by me princes govern,
and nobles—all who rule on earth.]*
- ¹⁷ *I love those who love me,
and those who seek me find me.*
- ¹⁸ *With me are riches and honor,
enduring wealth and prosperity.*
- ¹⁹ *My fruit is better than fine gold;
what I yield surpasses choice silver.*
- ²⁰ *I walk in the way of righteousness,*

*along the paths of justice,
21 bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me
and making their treasuries full.*

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Sermon: “Wisdom and creation – tracing a path to life”

Lady Wisdom calls out in the public square

8 Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice?

2 At the highest point along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand;

3 beside the gate leading into the city, at the entrance, she cries aloud:

4 “To you, O people, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind.

5 You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, set your hearts on it.

Today’s passage reiterates the public nature of wisdom – that it is relevant in the public

square and relevant for our world.

Wisdom and the public square – arrogance or humility?

12 “I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion.

*13 To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance,
evil behaviour and perverse speech.*

As we think of this focus on pride and arrogance we can think of the relevance of this as we think about the creation and its care. Sometimes people can set themselves above God and have a sense of their power and powerfulness. It is not surprising that this section leads into a section on kings and rulers of nations.

14 Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power.

15 By me kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just;

16 by me princes govern, and nobles—all who rule on earth.

As we think of COP26 we see the challenges for kings and rulers. How do they use the natural resources of the world? Do they use them for short-term benefit? Do they use them for themselves? For their people? Or are they conscious of the wider needs of the planet?

Do they display, counsel and sound judgment? Do they have insight?

Remember the verse in the hymn – “We seek your kingdom”

Peace truth and justice reigning everywhere

With us be present in our public square

Fill all who lead with your integrity

Transform revive and heal society

It’s important that we encourage integrity in our leaders – that we encourage justice in the public sphere. As Christians we also need to share in the care of creation – adopt an attitude of humility.

17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.

18 With me are riches and honour, enduring wealth and prosperity.

19 My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver.

Wisdom issues a challenge – riches along with honour, leading to prosperity – an enduring prosperity. In other words, embracing wisdom leads to a more honourable and enduring future.

²⁰ *I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice,*
²¹ *bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me and making their treasuries full.*
The link is made between wisdom and righteousness, between wisdom and justice. Leading to a rich inheritance and full treasuries with resources that have been honourably gained.

Wisdom and creation – learning to delight!

³⁰ *Then I was constantly at his side.*

I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence,

³¹ *rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in humankind.*

Delight in God's presence and God's creation characterises those who follow the way of wisdom. We need to recognise the creator – then be aware of the needs of the creation.

We need to learn to delight in the creation and its wonders.

Application

Wisdom and creation – the way of life or the way of death?

³⁴ *Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.*

³⁵ *For those who find me find life and receive favour from the LORD.*

³⁶ *But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death."*

As we think of the themes of wisdom and creation being intertwined we realise that the relationship between life and death is an individual issue but also a collection one. The abuse of creation can lead to environmental death – it reflects choices away from wisdom – and the death of creation will have a negative impact on the human beings living in creation.

³⁶ *But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death."*

By contrast ³⁵ *those who find me [wisdom] find life and receive favour from the LORD.*

As we reflect on the personification of wisdom that Proverbs describe in relation to the creation we see the challenges that we face in our modern context. Are we able to draw on the Christian faith and its resources to detect wisdom, and to see it as a path to life. This will lead us to delight in God's creation and to use it sensibly – where we can find prosperity with honour and in a way which endures.

I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence,

³¹ *rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in humankind.*

Wisdom points us not just to creation, but to our fellow creatures and to God.

May we seek wisdom with all our heart and all our mind and all our strength!

Response to the Word of God

When sadness triumphs over joy:

Creation groans.

When darkness threatens to put out the light:

Creation groans.

When fear knocks at our door:

Creation groans.

When despair threatens to destroy our hope:

Creation groans.

When we hurt each other:
Creation groans.
When our words pull down rather than building up:
Creation groans.
When our actions do not speak of the love of God:
Creation groans.
When our lives fail to reflect the life of the Creator:
Creation groans.

We long for the day when creation is restored
and creation's groaning comes to an end,
when there will be no more sadness, darkness, fear or despair,
when our lives will speak of you and we see you face to face.
Until then Lord,
please forgive us, strengthen us and help us,
to live a little more for you,
and to care for your creation today and in the days ahead.
Amen.

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4 - CH4 140 Lord your hands have formed this world (Gayon Ni Higami)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqEH5jzfZw4>

Prayer for others and ourselves

God of the universe,
We thank You for Your many good gifts -
For the beauty of Creation and its rich and varied fruits,
yet, through greed and ignorance, we scar your world with plastic waste
and throw so much away.
Make us more like Jesus, treading gently on our common home,
and breathe your Spirit on us, that we may care more deeply for your Earth.

We pray for the Church:
that she may be a beacon of hope throughout the world, reminding us all of our
responsibility to care for and protect God's precious gift of creation.

We pray for the world, our common home:
that through God's grace we may hear its cry of the damage done and be moved to protect
it for future generations to enjoy.

We pray for those people who are already facing droughts,
floods and storms: that God may grant them strength and hope for the future
as they work to adapt to the changing climate.

We pray for our parish and our local community:
that through the grace of God we may hear the urgent cry of the earth and of the poor
and be inspired to respond at this crucial time.

We pray for the world we live in:
that God may open our eyes to recognise the goodness of all creation and help us
to do what we can to restore and care for the wonderful gift that we have been given.

We pray for world leaders:
that God may grant them wisdom to make just decisions which respect the earth
and all that lives in it, especially those who are poorest and most vulnerable.

We pray for our local community:
that through God's grace we may be good neighbours to each other and to the whole of creation,
restoring and caring for all that God has made.

We pray for those who are waiting for essential medical treatment and ask that you
ease their suffering and give them patience.

Hear our prayer in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

5 - CH4 717 O Christ the healer we have come (Cannon Tallis) – v1-5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1O5vdLNE-Gw>

Sending

“Now then, my children, listen to me;
blessed are those who keep my ways.
Listen to my instruction and be wise;
do not disregard it.
Blessed are those who listen to me,
watching daily at my doors,
waiting at my doorway.
For those who find me find life
and receive favour from the Lord. AMEN ® NIV

6 - CH4 250 Sent by the Lord am I (Sent by the Lord)

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

Benediction

Bless our hearts O God, with the love of Christ
Bless our minds O God, with the wisdom of Christ
Bless our bodies O God, with the power of the resurrection of Christ. Amen.

We are using materials from Engage Worship and Weekly Worship