

Sunday Service - Web
Avoch linked with Fortrose-Rosemarkie
Remembrance Sunday
Wisdom for Living: Proverbs 1-9
Proverbs 9:1-18
“Lady Wisdom and Madam Folly –
invitations to the table – which feast will we choose?”

Welcome / Intimations

Call to Worship – words of the Psalmist:

I lift up my eyes to the hills – from whence will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. ®NIV

1 – MP 949 Your kingdom come O God (St Cecilia)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe-Vy5LkYEs>

Prayers of Approach/ Confession/ Lord’s Prayer

Lord God, Father of all mercies, we thank you for the goodness of all the things that you give us.

We thank you for the freedom that your grace gives us.

We rejoice in the inheritance that you have prepared for us in Christ Jesus.

We pray that as those who seek your kingdom,
we would look to you for grace to be instruments of kindness
help us in days to come to seek the good of this world, to work for peace and justice
and healing among the nations whose character and customs differ from ours
and we pray for the Christian community across the world and its role in bringing
reconciliation.

CONFESSION (we come to a time of confession)

Merciful and faithful God, your purpose is to fold both earth and heaven in a single peace.
With sorrow we confess that in our hearts we keep alive the passions and pride
that lead to hatred and even to war. We are not always worthy of your love nor of the
sacrifice made by others on our behalf. So we come into your presence to confess our sins.

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.

Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things

in your beloved Son, the King of all:

govern the hearts and minds of those in authority,

and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin,

to be subject to his just and gentle rule; who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

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 – CH4 266 God the omnipotent (Russia)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVPMYmWd7X8>

Word of God - Proverbs 9:1-18

Wisdom has built her house;
she has set up its seven pillars.
² She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine;
she has also set her table.
³ She has sent out her servants, and she calls
from the highest point of the city,
⁴ 'Let all who are simple come to my house!'
To those who have no sense she says,
⁵ 'Come, eat my food
and drink the wine I have mixed.
⁶ Leave your simple ways and you will live;
walk in the way of insight.'
⁷ Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults;
whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse.
⁸ Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you;
rebuke the wise and they will love you.
⁹ Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.
¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
¹¹ For through wisdom your days will be many,
and years will be added to your life.
¹² If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you;
if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.
¹³ Folly is an unruly woman;
she is simple and knows nothing.
¹⁴ She sits at the door of her house,
on a seat at the highest point of the city,
¹⁵ calling out to those who pass by,
who go straight on their way,
¹⁶ 'Let all who are simple come to my house!'
To those who have no sense she says,
¹⁷ 'Stolen water is sweet;
food eaten in secret is delicious!'
¹⁸ But little do they know that the dead are there,
that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.

**Sermon: “Lady Wisdom and Madam Folly –
invitations to the table –
which feast will we choose?”**

Proverbs 9:1-18

The call of Lady Wisdom

Wisdom has built her house;

she has set up its seven pillars.

² *She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine;*

she has also set her table.

A house built on seven pillars - would be characteristic of a large and well-built house. (Wisdom’s house of seven pillars could refer to the epitome of such a house – in contrast to certain pagan temples with seven pillars in the Ancient Near East). Certainly, in the house, wisdom has set the table for a feast!

The invitation to come to God’s offer of life is expressed elsewhere in dining metaphors:

‘Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;

and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

² *Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy?*

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

Even in the gospels with a different note suggesting the cost:

⁵¹ *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live for ever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.’*

⁵⁵ *For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.*

This invitation has an interesting note – a feast in a splendid house – but who is invited?

³ *She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city,*

⁴ *‘Let all who are simple come to my house!’*

Lady wisdom sends out her servants – from the pinnacle of the city she cries out and she beckons the simple ... (We’ve noted that this refers to simple in moral terms.)

To those who have no sense she says:

⁵ *‘Come, eat my food*

and drink the wine I have mixed.

⁶ *Leave your simple ways and you will live;*

walk in the way of insight.’

The table of wisdom is set even for the morally simple that they might gain insight – and find their lives enriched in ways that they could not have imagined. This reflects the way in which Isaiah 55 and John 6 (above) reach out with God’s appeal.

⇒ The passage above in Isaiah 55 continues - *Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.*

⇒ Jesus said in John 6 *‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.*

These are offers that God extends to us even today:

⇒ Will we come?

⇒ Will we trust and believe?

⇒ Will we sit at God's table?

⁷ *Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults;
whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse.*

⁸ *Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you;
rebuke the wise and they will love you.*

⁹ *Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.*

The simple and the wise contrasted

The simple and the wise have different responses to wisdom. Here the focus is on the capacity to learn. Mockers will hate you the more you try to share wisdom. The wise will be wiser still. Kidner contrasts them like this – “the scoffer with their closed mind”; “the wise – ever teachable and ever progressing ...”

¹¹ *For through wisdom your days will be many,
and years will be added to your life.*

¹² *If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you;
if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.*

Our responses to God can be collective – they shape our character: “Your character is the one thing you cannot borrow lend or escape for it is you.”

¹⁰ *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

David Atkinson makes an important point about this theme. He draws on two strands.

1) The first is the idea of the philosopher of science Michael Polanyi that all knowledge including scientific knowledge is “personal.”

2) The second is this: Atkinson gives the example of his daughter learning to cycle to illustrate what he means! She had to do it for herself take the risks, make the act of faith and cycle without anyone holding her to see if she would balance.

He sums up:

“Knowledge comes by participating by doing by taking part. We do not know many things by just collecting facts but by participation. For Polanyi ... science ... involves an irreducibly personal and moral dimension in its knowledge. This is not very far from the Wisdom of Proverbs, in which the fear of the Lord holds moral and intellectual life together.”

The Christian gospel reminds us that the entry point to God's wisdom can be unexpected:

²² *Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

But the invitation is to come, come to the table, come to God and feast on the things he has prepared for us.

Lady Wisdom versus Madam Folly

The refrain of wisdom is followed by the theme of folly: the metaphors contrast the demure woman and the unruly woman as pictures of wisdom and folly.

¹³ *Folly is an unruly woman;
she is simple and knows nothing.*

The contrast is in the character of Lady Wisdom and Madam Folly, and in the outcomes, but curiously, the appeal is to the same group – “the simple.”

¹⁴ *She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city,*

¹⁵ *calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way,*

¹⁶ *‘Let all who are simple come to my house!’*

Madam Folly calls out as well: but what she offers is tainted ...

To those who have no sense she says,

¹⁷ *‘Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!’*

The feast at the table of folly may seem sweet and it may seem delicious and attractive but it leads to death.

¹⁸ *But little do they know that the dead are there,*

that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.

Madam folly and the paths to death and the realm of the dead. A stark choice awaits us. These verses are a reminder that war is not the only circumstance that leads to death ...

“Like the last movements of a symphony, this final chapter of the wisdom speeches recapitulates the major motifs of chapters 1-9. It pits Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly against each other in language that is ... parallel. The issues of choice that have dotted every page and virtually every paragraph are here made starkly clear.

They are nothing less than life or death.” (Hubbard)

Application

Are we wise about our relationships with our neighbours? The rhetoric about neighbours to our south in Scotland and to the south of England has ebbed and flowed in recent days. Love of our neighbour as well as love of God are “pillars” of wisdom in the New Testament.

On Remembrance Sunday, may God grant us wisdom and keep us from the table of folly as we think of maintaining good relationships with our neighbours in today’s troubled world.

3 – CH4 604 Holy Wisdom, Lamp of Learning (In Babilone)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dJKiLis1Xg>

Act of Remembrance

Prayer for others and ourselves

O God of truth and justice,

we hold before you those whose memory we cherish,

and those whose names we will never know.

Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world,

and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm.

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict,

and ask that God may give us peace:

for the service men and women who have died in the violence of war,

each one remembered by and known to God;

- may God give peace

for those who love them in death as in life,
offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss;
- may God give peace

for all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day,
remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return;
- may God give peace

for civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror,
calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity;
- may God give peace

for peace-makers and peace-keepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free;
- may God give peace

for all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious;
asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace.
- may God give peace

4 - CH4 Lord for the Years (Lord for the Years)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkTrFQLy6js>

Call to Remembrance

Will the congregation please stand:

LEADER

They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old;
age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun
and in the morning,
we will remember them.

ALL:

We will remember them

SILENCE

Prayer:

Ever-living God, we remember those whom you have gathered
from the storm of war into the peace of your presence;
may that same peace calm our fears, bring justice to all peoples
and establish harmony among the nations, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

5 - CH4 703 National Anthem

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xm7CZvvsC64>

Sending

Let us go from this place
with minds that never forget,
with hearts that grow in hope,
with lives that shine Christ's light.
Let us go to serve, to reconcile, to bring peace,
and to stand united as children of the light.

6 - CH4 813 All praise and thanks to God (Nun Danket)

<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/hymn/813-all-praise-and-thanks-to-god>

To hear the hymn sung please select the Caroline Hood/Michael Harris version

Benediction

God grant to the living grace,
to the departed rest,
to the Church, the Queen, the
Commonwealth
and all people,
unity, peace and concord,
and to us and all God's servants,
life everlasting.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all
and remain with you always.
Amen.

We are using materials from Weekly Worship and CTBI