

## Proverbs 1:20-33

Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded, and because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices. For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them; but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster."

## Finding Wisdom

In our world of internet, Twitter, Facebook, and Skype we might find it hard to imagine the days of Proverbs, when communication was by word of mouth, letter or herald's decree. This is why "Wisdom" goes into the streets to declare her message from God. It would be where we would be, doing our daily shopping as unrefrigerated food in Jerusalem's hot climate would not last very long.

Imagine then, walking to market or work and then home. And on that walk, listening to a woman's voice above the din of the crowd. She is calling us to listen, to gain wisdom by listening to God's claim on our lives which she names "fear of the Lord", and we call "knowing God is God and that we are not". In her call, Wisdom names the consequences of not listening, of not choosing wisdom. Not like she is ill-wishing anyone, just announcing the consequences of choosing foolishness over wisdom.

Now here is our dilemma. Depending on where we go for news, what is called wise and foolish may not be one and the same. I wonder if Paul faced the same dilemma with the Corinthians as he wrote to them that what the learned name to be

wise is foolishness to God and visa versa. To believe a dead Jew who suffered a criminal's death in a backwater like Palestine came back to life and offers those who believe and follow him new life was and is foolish to the wise. Yet Paul calls this foolishness God's wisdom.

And those whom society names as wise might rebut, saying to choose hope and new life, sight unseen, on a promise from a story is foolish. Stick to the facts, the wise might advise us. Yet when Thomas has to see the nail marks in Jesus' hands and feel the spear cut in his side to believe Jesus was alive again and did, Jesus praises those who believe without seeing - without proof.

If such foolishness is wisdom then praise be for those who choose foolishness, Wisdom says! For the value of such foolishness was clear to Paul when Jesus changed Paul's life on the road to Damascus. The value of such foolishness was clear to Zacchaeus when he first saw Jesus, throwing away a life-time of gain for the love he felt Jesus radiate. For Zacchaeus found the one real thing of value, the first thing of real value he ever gained - Jesus' unconditional acceptance and welcoming love. Who here does not seek the same?

Thus what seems foolish and naive on the surface to world-wise people is what Wisdom invites us into on the streets of Proverbs. Perhaps only here may we "be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster" (Proverbs 1:33). The same wisdom is spoken by people here. In the midst of our aging congregation and diminished numbers, they see God doing a new thing here.

For we are experiencing growing ministries like summer lunch across congregation and neighborhood including University United Methodist Church. We are finding new energy and deepening commitment to feed children all summer as 501's ability to do the same diminishes. Our energy and commitment rises to feed the hungry at Let's Help with other congregations as well as to feed the hungry through walking and giving for the October 11th Crop Walk.

At the same time there is growing excitement over the new Sunday School curriculum, from children's "Grace and Gratitude" to adult "Feasting on the Word". We are committed to planting seeds of wisdom across all ages, lovingly nurturing them into fruition. To this end we offer an additional opportunity to view video by Professor AJ Levine and dialogue as journey across the Old Testament Mondays from 6 - 7 pm starting September 21st as source of wisdom as well. Worship is also doing a new thing, wait until you come for October 4th worship!

The continued faithfulness of many reveal new and renewed energy across Westminster congregation. We see Property Committee active with repairs of nursery, front and internal steps. Landscape committee repaired the nursery leak and continues to share God's beauty with us. Gifts and Memorials' Committee brightens our Chapel with recovered chairs. All are signs of God renewing life within us.

Though we soon celebrate past leaders, the new efforts of Choir and HandBell Choir reflect God's energy and Spirit flowing through and among us as we welcome Brad Stipcak as Choir Director. New energy to share and be together is bubbling up through Westminster congregation's enthusiastic participation in Outreach/Evangelism Council's new picture directory, in PW Bible Study, book clubs, bridge, ROMEOS, Mariners and in many other ways. Perhaps wisdom as knowledge of God is intertwined through all these seekings to be faithful to God, accord to our gifts.

In his "Theology of Hope," Jurgen Moltmann writes that to believe the world is steadily declining with no chance of getting better and so despair are symptoms of hopelessness, a kind of "sin against hope." Instead, hope, Moltmann argues, is to believe in the future Jesus brings us through resurrection, and to see the present through that lens.

Perhaps this is what Wisdom is declaring on the streets and marketplaces so long ago. Wisdom calling above the din of the crowd that Jesus is our hope, our new horizon through whom we find a "world of possibilities;" through which we might live now with future hope in our hearts.

Wisdom calling us, here at Westminster, to choose the foolishness of faith and new birth in the midst of the facts of decline and loss, trusting God will show us the way. To choose hope becomes possible when we let go of our judgement and trust God's greater knowledge and wisdom. Then we will find a new vision for Westminster Presbyterian Church's future. Then we will discover the new thing God is doing here, and expand into a new and hopeful future, together!