

In Search of Wisdom

Like many others over the past few months, I have been agonizing over how to make some difficult decisions. I want to make good choices but feel that as a society, we face uncertainty in some facets of life that we have not had to deal with before. Now more than ever, I am in need of wisdom.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could be given a simple answer? I would love to open up the book of Proverbs and have King Solomon tell me directly whether or not to put my child in daycare or if I should risk taking a trip to visit family. Sadly, as I dig in, I realize that the wisdom in Proverbs is not so specific to my situation.

When I was pregnant with my daughter Emma, my data scientist husband and I devoured a parenting book written by economist Emily Oster. While describing the art of decision science to her readers, she explains that "making good decisions requires... all the information about the decision [and] the right way to weigh the pluses and minuses of the decision."

In order to make the 'right' and 'wise' decision, we must not only evaluate the facts but also the costs and benefits of each choice - applying wisdom to our individual values and needs. I take comfort in this technique. Making good decisions may not always be easy, but having a guide and a process can help take doubt and uncertainty out of the equation.

Proverbs is not a set of instructions that I can follow to the letter but rather a path to guide me towards living a good and righteous life. One of the beautiful aspects of Proverbs is that though centuries-old, the essential wisdom still endures. The basic truths contained in these pages only need to be recontextualized for our own personal lives.

Let's keep each other in our prayers that we each may be fruitful in our search for wisdom and that it will successfully guide us to making the right choices for ourselves and our families.



WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sunday, August 2, 2020 | online, 10:00a | Ninth Sunday after Pentecost



Preparation for Worship

Do we know what it means to be struck by grace? It does not mean that we suddenly believe that God exists, or that Jesus is the Savior, or that the Bible contains the truth [...] Furthermore, grace does not mean simply that we are making progress in our moral self-control, in our fight against special faults, and in our relationships to men and to society [...] Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness. It strikes us when we walk through the dark valley of a meaningless and empty life. It strikes us when we feel that our separation is deeper than usual [...] when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: 'You are accepted. You are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you [...].'

In the light of this grace we perceive the power of grace in our relation to others and to ourselves. We experience the grace of being able to look frankly into the eyes of another, the miraculous grace of reunion of life with life. We experience the grace of understanding each other's words. We understand not merely the literal meaning of the words, but also that which lies behind them, even when they are harsh or angry [...] We experience the grace which is able to overcome the tragic separation of the sexes, of the generations, of the nations, of the races, and even the utter strangeness between man and nature. Sometimes grace appears in all these separations to reunite us with those to whom we belong. For life belongs to life.

[...] We experience moments in which we accept ourselves, because feel that we have been accepted by that which is greater than we.

—Paul Tillich,

"You Are Accepted" in *The Shaking of the Foundations* (1948)

Gathering and Preparing for God's Word

Prelude *As the Deer/Fairest Lord Jesus* arr. Hayes

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

From the corners of the world,  
from the confusion of life,  
from the loneliness of our hearts,  
Gather us, O God.

To feed our minds,  
to fire our imagination,  
to free our hearts,  
Gather us, O God.

Hymn #35 *Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty* LOBE DEN HERREN  
**See hymn sheet.**

Prayer of Confession & Assurance of Pardon

Eternal God,  
in whom we live and move and have our being,  
whose mercy we forget in the blindness of our hearts:

Cleanse us from all our offenses,  
and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires,  
that with reverent and humble hearts  
we may draw near to you,  
confessing our faults,  
confiding in your grace,  
and finding in you our refuge and strength;  
through Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.

Hearing God's Word

Prayer for Illumination  
Old Testament Lesson, *Proverbs 1:1-7*  
New Testament Lesson, *Mark 7:24-30*  
Sermon "Word Against Words"  
Anthem *Canticle of the Turning*

Cooney

Responding to God's Word

Affirmation of Faith, *Confession of Belhar, 10.1-2, 10.7, 10.9*

We believe in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit. This, God has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.

We believe in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family.

We believe

- that God has revealed God's self as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
- that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the right;
- that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.**

Hymn #770 *I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table* WELCOME TABLE  
**See hymn sheet.**

Charge and Benediction  
Postlude *Rondo* John Bull

Leading Worship this Morning

Leigh Stuckey, *preaching*  
Mary Kathleen Duncan, *liturgist*  
Jay Culclasure, *lay reader*  
Nancy Smith, *organist*  
Marcella Frese, *percussionist*  
Judy McKenney, *vocalist*

# 35 Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty

1 Praise ye the Lord, the Al - might - y, the King of cre -  
 2 Praise ye the Lord, who o'er all things so won-drous - ly  
 3 Praise ye the Lord! O let all that is in me a -

a - tion! O my soul, praise him, for he is thy  
 reign - eth, shel - ters thee un - der his wings, yea, so  
 dore him! All that hath life and breath, come now with

health and sal - va - tion! All ye who hear, now to his  
 gen - tly sus - tain - eth! Hast thou not seen how thy de -  
 prais - es be - fore him! Let the a - men sound from his

tem - ple draw near; join me in glad ad - o - ra - tion!  
 sires e'er have been grant - ed in what he or - dain - eth?  
 peo - ple a - gain; glad - ly for aye we a - dore him.

This very strong 17th-century German hymn employs many phrases from the psalms, especially Psalms 150 and 103:1-6. It did not receive an effective English translation until the mid-19th century, but has remained popular ever since, thanks in part to its stirring tune.

TEXT: Joachim Neander, 1680; trans. Catherine Winkworth, 1863, alt. LOBE DEN HERREN  
 MUSIC: Stralsund Erneswertes Gesangbuch, 1665; harm. The Chorale Book for England, 1863 14.14.4.7.8

# 770 I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table

1 I'm gon-na eat at the wel - come ta - ble; I'm gon - na  
 2 I'm gon-na eat and drink with my Je - sus, Al - le - lu - ia.  
 3 I'm gon-na join with sis - ters, broth - ers;  
 4 Here all the world will find a wel - come;  
 5 We're gon-na feast on milk and hon - ey;

I'm gon-na eat at the wel - come ta - ble, Al - le - lu - ia.  
 I'm gon-na eat and drink with my Je - sus, Al - le - lu - ia.  
 I'm gon-na join with sis - ters, broth - ers, Al - le - lu - ia.  
 here all the world will find a wel - come, Al - le - lu - ia.  
 we're gon-na feast on milk and hon - ey, Al - le - lu - ia.

I'm gon-na eat at the wel - come ta - ble; I'm gon - na  
 I'm gon-na eat and drink with my Je - sus; I'm gon - na  
 I'm gon-na join with sis - ters, broth - ers; I'm gon - na  
 Here all the world will find a wel - come; here all the  
 We're gon-na feast on milk and hon - ey; we're gon - na

eat at the wel - come ta - ble, Al - le - lu - ia.  
 eat and drink with my Je - sus, Al - le - lu - ia.  
 join with sis - ters, broth - ers, Al - le - lu - ia.  
 world will find a wel - come, Al - le - lu - ia.  
 feast on milk and hon - ey, Al - le - lu - ia.

The image of a great feast showing God's welcome of all people was part of Jewish tradition (Isaiah 25:6-9) and underlies Jesus' parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24). Such equality remains as unknown to many people today as it was to the slaves who created this spiritual.

TEXT: African American spiritual, alt. WELCOME TABLE  
 MUSIC: African American spiritual; arr. Carl Diton, 1980, alt. Irregular  
 Music Arr. © 1930, rev. G. Schimmer, Inc.