

SERVICE – “Wisdom Ultimately Leads to Blessings.”

Intro: today we’re looking at The Book of Proverbs, which Jesus would have read before He started His ministry. Let’s start our Service today by Praising God and singing:

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GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

*Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Time for Prayer

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O LORD MY GOD! when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

And when I think that God His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die-I scarce can take it in.
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home-what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

1st Reading – Proverbs 3:1-20

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 around 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 man⁵ 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. ⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits 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. ¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed. ¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; ²⁰ by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.

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WHEN WE WALK WITH THE LORD

In the light of His word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey!

*Trust and obey!
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.*

Not a shadow can rise,
Not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt nor a fear,
Not a sigh nor a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey!

Not a burden we bear,

Not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay:
Not a grief nor a loss,
Not a frown nor a cross,
But is blessed if we trust and obey!

But we never can prove
The delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favour He shows,
And the joy He bestows,
Are for those who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do,
Where He sends, we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey!

The Message

In verse 3 we read: "³ **Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.**" My Study Bible tells me: "Loyalty and kindness are important character qualities. Both involve actions as well as attitudes. A loyal person acts responsibly. A kind person works for justice for others. Thoughts and words are not enough – our life reveals whether we are truly loyal and kind. **Just think for a moment – do my actions measure up to my attitudes?**

In vv5 & 6 "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.

When we have an important decision to make, we sometimes feel we can't trust anyone – not even God. But God knows what is best for us. He is a better judge of what we want than we are! We must trust Him completely in every choice we make. We should not omit careful thinking or belittle our God given ability to reason; but we should not trust our own ideas to the exclusion of all others. We must not be wise in our own eyes but be willing to listen to and be corrected by God's Word and wise counsellors. We should bring our decisions to God in prayer, use the Bible as our guide and then follow God's leading. He will direct our paths by both guiding and protecting you. Solomon said, "to receive God's guidance we must seek God's will in all we do." This means turning every area of our life over to God. About one thousand years later, Jesus emphasized this same truth, in Mathew 6:33 we read: "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" So we must examine our values and priorities:

What is important to you?

In what areas have you not acknowledged God?

You may already acknowledge God in many areas of your life, but the areas where you attempt to restrict or ignore God will cause you grief. Make God a vital part of everything you do, then God will guide you because you will be working to accomplish His purposes.

In vv 9 & 10, "⁹ Honour the *LORD* with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine." This refers to the practice of giving to God the first and best portion of the harvest, as can be read in Deuteronomy 26:10 – "¹⁰ and now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, *LORD*, have given me." Many people give God their leftovers. If they can afford to donate anything after the bills are paid, they do so. These people may be sincere and contribute willingly, but they are not obeying what God says. God wants the first part of our income. This demonstrates that God, not possessions, has first place in our life and that our resources belong to Him (we are only managers). Giving to God helps us conquer greed, helps us properly manage God's resources and opens us up to receive God's special blessings.

In vv 11 & 12, "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." "Discipline means to teach and to train." The word Discipline sounds negative to many people because some disciplinarians are not loving. God, however, is the source of all love. He doesn't punish us because He enjoys inflicting pain but because He is deeply concerned about our development. He knows that in order to become morally strong and good, we must learn the difference between right and wrong. His loving discipline enables us to do that. It is difficult to know when God has been disciplining us until we look back on the situation later. Not every calamity comes directly from God, of course. But if we rebel against God and refuse to repent when God has identified some sin in our lives, He may use guilt, crises, or bad experiences to

bring us back to Him. Sometimes, however, difficult times come even when we have no flagrant sin. Then our response should be patience, integrity, and confidence that God will show us what to do.

"The writer of Proverbs sees wisdom as a person (vv13-18). Through the lens of the New Testament, we see that that person is Jesus. Paul tells us in his first Letter to the Corinthians, "that Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God," (1:24). Until you find a relationship with Jesus, life will not really make sense. The entire universe was created through Jesus (John 1:3). He loves you. In a relationship with Jesus, you find God's wisdom and God's power.

"When you find Jesus, you find the source of all wisdom. This is the way of blessing (Proverbs 3:13a). it is also the way to understanding (v.13b). it is far more profitable than all the material blessings (vv14-15a). in fact nothing you desire can compare with her (v15b). this is the path to long life, (v16, which is 'eternal life' in the New Testament, see John 3:16 = *"16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* Here you find true riches and honour (Proverbs 3:16). This is the way to a peace beyond understanding ((v.17). here you find the tree of life." (BioY 28)

I finish by Reading the whole of Proverbs 4:

Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding.

2 I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. **3** For I too was a son to my father still tender, and cherished by my mother.

4 Then he taught me, and he said to me, "Take hold of my words with all your heart;

keep my commands, and you will live. **5** Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. **6** Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you, love her, and she will watch over you. **7** The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

8 Cherish her, and she will exalt you, embrace her, and she will honour you.

9 She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown." **10** Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many.

11 I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. **12** When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. **13** Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. **14** Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. **15** Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. **16** For they cannot rest until they do evil; they are robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble. **17** They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. **18** The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. **19** But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. **20** My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. **21** Do not let them out of your sight keep them within your heart; **22** for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body. **23** Above all else, guard your heart for everything you do flows from it. **24** Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. **25** Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly

before you. **26** Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. **27** Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

The Book of Proverbs contains many strong statements about the benefits of wisdom, including long life, wealth, honour and peace.

If you aren't experiencing them, does this mean you are short on wisdom? Not necessarily. Instead of guarantees, these statements are general principles. In a perfect world, wise behaviour would always lead to the benefits. Even in our troubled world, living wisely usually results in obvious blessings – but not always! Sometimes sin intervenes, and some blessings must be delayed until Jesus returns to establish His eternal Kingdom. **That is why we must live by believing and not seeing. We can be sure that wisdom ultimately leads to blessings.**

Proverbs are as right for us today as they were the day they were written!

Let's pray: Heavenly Father we pray that we can live our lives in ways to honour and please You forever, we ask in Jesus' precious Name, Amen.

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MAY THE MIND OF CHRIST MY SAVIOUR

Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.

May the word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,

That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
This is victory.

May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus,
As I onward go.

THE GRACE

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all for ever more, Amen.

This Service has been prepared by: Christopher Stirling of West End Congregational Church, Haverhill, UK.
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