

Community Worship

Wesley Uniting Church, Forrest
12 September 2021

Wisdom for Living



Lady Wisdom
The Centre for Hebraic Thought

Gathering the People

Greeting: May the peace of Holy One, Holy Three be with you all:
And also with you.

Welcome and News

Acknowledgement of Country

Lighting the Community Candle

Introit: 'God be in My Head' – Elsa Huber

Call to Worship

Come into this sacred space to worship God
whose teaching is perfect;
whose directions are sure.

Come into this holy place to worship God
whose standards are right;
whose commandment is clear;
whose judgements are true.

Come with holy fear —
to be given life, and made wise,
to have your heart stirred and your eyes opened wide.
Come — let us worship God.

Hymn: Let all creation dance (TiS 187, Darwall, Brian Arthur Wren)
Soloist, Jade McFaul, Organist Elijah Lim

Prayer of Adoration

So many voices,
so many signs,
so many choices and opinions
all promising wisdom

and the life it brings.

It's tempting to listen,
tempting to try these well-marketed principles
especially now, when so much is at stake.

But, then I remember,
wisdom is not an idea,
not a method or technique,
not a formula to buy or sell.

It's much simpler, and much more difficult than that,
for it requires the unpredictable,
the time-consuming,
the vulnerable work
of relationship with you, God.

So, here I am, to lose myself in you again,
and to let your wisdom find me.

John van de Laar

Prayer of Confession

This prayer stems from today's Gospel reading, Mark 8:27-38, the midpoint of the gospel narrative about Jesus, where the apostle Peter confesses Jesus' identity. He is correct in form but not in substance, as he fails to understand the meaning of his own confession. That may we may understand ours!

Let us be still and listen to the voice of God

Silence

That we claim to follow Jesus Christ,
but our worldview and values fail to conform to a life that lives generously
and graciously

That we claim to follow Jesus Christ,
but our relationships are limited to those who are just like us: who look
like us, who live like us, who think like us.

That we claim to follow Jesus Christ,
but through the years it has become a habit,
more than a real catalyst for change.

O God, forgive us

An Assurance

Hear Christ's words of grace to us:
'Your sins are forgiven'

Thanks be to God

Entering the Story

Story with children – Jules Wright

Reading of Scripture

Proverbs 1:20-33 David Evered

This week's passage from Proverbs strikes a note that is in keeping with the mainstream of wisdom tradition, which held that following wisdom would lead to a full and happy life. Here, wisdom (in Greek, *sophia*) is personified as a female prophet, calling people to heed wisdom, warning them of the calamity that befalls those who ignore the ways of the wise. It is also a touch ironic that this desirable quality, wisdom, would be epitomised by the image of woman – this in a culture where women were not themselves allowed to learn. One of the issues that flows from the Wisdom literature is whether in fact people can avoid bad events by “following God's ways”. This is a claim made within much of Proverbs and other sources as well, however it is contested within books such as Job where following God's ways may well lead to more problems. This latter view is consistent with the Gospel, where the crucifixion is the result of Jesus' actions.

²⁰Wisdom cries out in the street;

in the squares she raises her voice.

²¹At the busiest corner she cries out;

at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

²²“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?

How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing

and fools hate knowledge?

²³Give heed to my reproof;

I will pour out my thoughts to you;

I will make my words known to you.

²⁴Because I have called and you refused,

have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,

²⁵and because you have ignored all my counsel

and would have none of my reproof,

²⁶I also will laugh at your calamity;

I will mock when panic strikes you,

²⁷when panic strikes you like a storm,

and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,

when distress and anguish come upon you.

²⁸Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;

they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.

²⁹Because they hated knowledge

and did not choose the fear of the LORD,

³⁰would have none of my counsel,

and despised all my reproof,

³¹therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way

and be sated with their own devices.

³²For waywardness kills the simple,

and the complacency of fools destroys them;

³³but those who listen to me will be secure

and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.”

Mark 8:27-38 Caroline Luke-Evered

This passage is often seen as a turning point in Mark's gospel. It signals a moment of recognition: Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ. But it all goes terribly wrong. One cannot escape the message: confession of Jesus as Christ is not enough! There is no shortage of successors to Peter in history and in the present day. Attributing status to Jesus, even adoration of Jesus, can deserve the same response now as then: 'Get behind me, Satan. Your focus is not on God's way but human ways'. So, Peter got it right in form, but got it wrong in substance. Yes, Jesus is Messiah, but not the usual kind of Messiah which most apparently expected. 8:33 suggests that there is something more at stake than Peter's view of messiahship: behind it is *a view of God*. Failure to grasp the way of the Son of Man - and, in effect, the way of God - repeats itself twice more, making a typical group of 3 occasions of which Mark is fond. The next prediction of the Son of Man suffering finds the disciples arguing who should be the greatest (9:30-37). The final one has James and John petitioning Jesus about the top jobs! We will meet them again in weeks to come (10:32-45). Mark makes it plain: only as the suffering Son of Man is Jesus the Messiah, and Jesus' way of being Messiah also points us to God's way of being God: vulnerable, compassionate and generous.

²⁷Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." ³⁰And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Response: In this is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

Preaching – Sarah

Prayers of the People

Today we pray for the peoples of Ghana and Nigeria. We also remember and give thanks for those who have gone before us in the faith: Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), a woman of prayer, music and philosophy, and Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961), former Secretary General of the United Nations. We also pray for dignity of all people as they confront covid and difficult domestic situations.

We close with a brief prayer for Afghanistan and her people

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGu_iGVmAg4

Sent into the World

Dedication of our offerings: Zoë Loxley Slump, Oboe, Schumann

Hymn: The Lord is my shepherd (TiS 659, My Shepherd, Brian Boniwell), Jade McFaul/Elijah Lim

Commissioning and Blessing



Liturgist: Rev Dr Geoff Dornan|Preacher: Rev Dr Sarah Agnew
Musicians: Elijah Lim, Elsa Huber, Zoë Loxley Slump
Soloist: Jade McFaul

Image: Lady Wisdom/The Hebraic Centre

Prayers, Sacredise, Ecumenical Prayer Cycle WCC, Mennonite Prayer for Afghanistan

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