

Morning Meditation ~ Wisdom

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 1 Corinthians 1:26-28

Last week we opened our hearts to the Serenity Prayer letting those words sink into and speak to our lives in such a time as time. The words of the Serenity Prayer invite us to be open to where we are called to act, where we need to wait, and the wisdom to know the difference. This week, I want us to dive and dwell in the question, how do we discover and uncover wisdom in the world today?

In some ways this might be the most important question we can ask ourselves and others today. The pathways to wisdom were once well defined. There were universities where you immersed yourself in the ideas and insights from the past, where you were engaged and encouraged to add your thoughts. When you were done, with a degree in hand, you set out to share your knowledge in the world. Over the last decades, our society and world have voiced questions whether the information we gleaned and were given really was the truth – the whole truth – and nothing but the truth. We came to understand that all information lacks the fullness and depth of all human experience. We came to see how bias and prejudice are a filter. We learned how to spot books written by experts that miss important voices, especially when dealing with history. Now we know that there is no such thing as an impartial observer. Your presence whether in society or in a scientific setting will have an impact upon what you are trying to study. In some ways, this does make sense. If I take a leaf, stick it on a slide under a microscope, I am not really seeing the leaf in its fullness. That doesn't mean I won't encounter some amazing parts of a leaf I can observe on a tree, but neither have I really grasped the fullness of a leaf either.

In other words, there is some foolishness baked and built into our human claims to wisdom. Put another way, do you see the world the same way you did a decade ago? Or even compared to the beginning of this year? The world is evolving and expanding. What once seemed brilliant becomes boneheaded. What once was genius now seeming is gullible. The promise of God, Paul tells us in the passage above, is the holy takes our less-than-brilliant moments and works with those in beautiful, creative ways. God desires our foolishness! And moreover, God's wisdom may not sound or look like what we as humans classify and call truth.

Let the last two sentences soak into your heart. My hunch is that it is hard to believe. We are brought up in a culture of a simple equation of success equals hard work. I was taught and told to study and get a degree and all would be well. Until a pandemic and systemic racism and echoes of the social problems we thought long solved suddenly are on our nightly news causing us to question, "Just how far have we come?" Perhaps our human wisdom that we could legislate the hardness of human hearts needs to be questioned. Perhaps we might feel foolish thinking that another conversation or another prayer or another meeting with officials is really going to change things, especially because there are those who like the world broken and divided.

In order to seek wisdom, we have to realize that foolishness and folly will be part of the mix. You can't have one without the other. Sometimes we learn not by doing it right, but by getting it wrong. This is one of the great truths in scripture. Take a moment to reflect on a time when your

mistake turned out to be a blessing. When a moment you stumbled turned into something sacred. It doesn't always happen with every miscue mixed into our lives. But, when we stay open to the good and bad, how God can move in the midst of both, we find a wisdom our hearts long for in these days.

Prayer: God born in a barn, You came to us embodied in One who wandered the countryside awaking wonder in the hearts of those who were hurting and afraid. Wander in to our lives with the wisdom we need. Grant us Your promise and presence and peace as we seek to live Your way this day. Amen.

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Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets 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? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you.
Proverbs 1:20-23

The whole book of Proverbs is a sermon on wisdom. Let us start with a very important observation: wisdom is personified as a woman. In Hebrew, wisdom is the word, "Sophia". Wisdom is also woven into the Spirit – the ruah or breath of God – that is there at the very beginning of Genesis hovering and hanging around with chaos and causing creation to come about. Wisdom, Spirit, Sophia, is often there in the midst of chaos and disorder. The Spirit parts the waters in the time of Moses. The Spirit calls out to Elijah who fled for the fear of his life. The Spirit is like waters of justice soaking and saturating God's people in the book of Amos. The Spirit surrounds Mary giving her strength to be the God-bearer.

Secondly, notice that wisdom isn't set apart or in some holy shrine or on some mountain top or monastery. Wisdom seems to be hanging out in the street and in the store where we go to buy grapes. Wisdom is right there in your neighborhood. Wisdom lives nearby. Wisdom cries out.

Third, we can confess that all of our ears are clogged with spiritual earwax of our own opinions. Building on yesterday, wisdom calls us to own our foolishness and foibles. Wisdom reminds us that no one has it all figured out. Wisdom is outside of us. While I believe that wisdom can come as close as our next breath and wisdom can enter our hearts, I also think wisdom will re-arrange your own life if you follow her! She will cause you to let go of what you cling to realizing that so much of human life is fleeting and fading. In another book of wisdom, Ecclesiastes, the writer there says life is like a mist. You cannot really grasp the fullness of God's presence or the mystery or marvel of this moment. It is too much for any of us. What we can do is be open, as fully as possible, to the experience and encounter of the here and now.

Fourth, wisdom invites us lean into and listen what we are hearing. When I hear Jacob Blake's mother pray, I hear wisdom. When I hear Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's granddaughter talk about her generation being the one to bring about an end to racism, I hear wisdom. When I hear my LGBTQ sisters and brothers tell me a truth that is born out of pain, I hear wisdom. When I

listen to poets and music and people who long for all people and all creation to thrive, I hear wisdom.

Wisdom woven into this day. You don't need to go to a special, sacred space. Wisdom is in our lives. May our hearts be open to such moments of dancing with the divine in our lives today.

Prayer: Open my ears, eyes, heart, and head to You, O God, for I need thee every hour this day. Amen.

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Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city, "Let all who are simple come to my house!" To those who have no sense she says, "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight." Proverbs 9:1-9

If you read the whole chapter of Proverbs 9, you will hear the author talk about how wisdom and foolishness each set a feast for us, inviting us to come and be fed. The difference is that wisdom will nourish and nurture us while foolishness will leave us wanting. Wisdom is a delicious banquet with food that feeds and fuels our mind, body, and soul. Foolishness meanwhile is serving up that which will leave us still feeling empty or could even cause harm. Essentially, wisdom is a farm to table feast while foolishness is a trip through a drive through window where we are given a greasy bottom brown bag of fried food. There is a visual for you!

Now, take that parable and move it into our lives. As we deal with wisdom this week, we need to understand a few things. One, we live in a post-truth world or what Stephen Colbert once called, "truthiness". We no longer worry if our ideas or what we say is built upon anything other than, "Does it feel right to me?" Our support often comes from others who feel the same way, called, "bias confirmation." Second, we manipulate experiences with photoshop and clipping snippets of sentences. There are computer programs where my face could be put on Gordon Hayward's body in such a way you would really wonder, "Uh, when did Wes get called by the Boston Celtics to play and where did he learn to dunk like that!?" Or we can edit videos that look authentic. Or we can create a mash up of images from separate moments and make it look like it was a seamless sequence of events. Third, it isn't only humans that do this, we now have computer programs that create such content day after day.

Suddenly the film, "The Matrix" doesn't seem like science fiction escapism. We are not in Kansas any longer. And we have joined Alice going down the rabbit hole into some strange world where things don't make sense.

Finally, we are fed this twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty-five days a year. We are constantly called to consume more and more of such "information" and never have any time to step back to reflect. **In so many ways, what we consume – consumes us!!** Pause with me, did your grand parents talk about consuming news? Your parents? My parents read the paper in the morning and watched Dan Rather at night. In-between, they lived life. I am sure they

missed some “breaking news” right when it happened, but they caught up. Maybe, they were even better informed because people had time to sort through sources. While it is true, important voices were left out intentionally, we might do well to consider what is filling our ears, our heads and our hearts. We might wonder what a diet of constantly checking our phones for the latest updates or having the news on all day is doing to us?

What Proverbs is inviting us to prayerfully ponder is what is feeding and fueling our souls? What are the ingredients that went into making the wisdom we are entertaining? How do we feel at the end of the day? Wisdom comes in a variety of ways. Wisdom enters our hearts through countless sources. Wisdom will keep inviting to a sacred presence that will challenge and even change us, but will also call us to encountering the holy in meaningful and life-giving ways.

Prayer: Speak, sing, and silence my soul to encounter You, O God, this day. Amen.

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The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer. Proverbs 9:10-12

Much of what we have focused on this week, has been external. I want to turn to the internal ways of knowing and wisdom. Wisdom comes from within us too. Listen to what Valarie Kaur writes:

“We can learn to mother ourselves!” Audre Lorde [1934–1992] once declared. So I decided to practice listening to the Wise Woman in me. I got a simple blank journal, carried it with me, and wrote in it every day . . . and simply let her speak. . . . Listening to her voice, literally every few hours, is how I began to practice loving myself. Here’s what I discovered about Wise Woman: Her voice is quiet. . . . I have to get really quiet in order to hear her. How do I know when I am hearing her voice? She is tender and truthful. She is not afraid of anything or anyone. She does not give me all the answers, but she does know what I need to do in this moment—to wonder, grieve, fight, rage, listen, reimagine, breathe, or push. She helps me show up to the labor as my best self.”

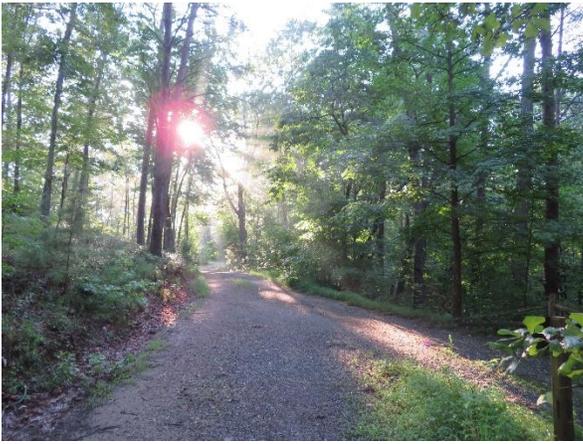
I find this a fascinating and faithful suggestion – to keep a journal each day attending to the ways Wisdom is weaving and working her way into our lives.

One other insight on the Scripture passage before you set out to see where wisdom is stirring around you and within you. The Scripture passage from Proverbs uses the word, “fear”. The Hebrew word can also be translated, “awe”. Or, “The awe of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Awe is that sense of wonder. Awe is standing before mystery and marvel without have words or knowing word will never fully capture or contain what you are experiencing. Awe is our “Spidey-sense” (that is the sense Spiderman knew something was going to happen) tingling within us. Awe opens us and can shift our attention away from ourselves, so we feel connected and more generous. Sometime today Google, “The Science of Awe” and read a bit about the work that is being done right now on this topic.

One of the difficulties we face right now is a deficit of awe. I look back over the last several months and certainly don't have an abundance of moments that connected me to others. One moment that did was when our family took a vacation to a secluded place in Georgia. We hiked. We laughed. We had campfires with s'mores. We played pool and corn hole and basketball. I took the photo below. There were moments of awe.

Awe and creation are often companions. But awe can also come from conversations. Awe can arrive in serendipitous ways. So, as you open your journal, be attentive and alert to awe around you and within you. Because awe and wisdom can often enter our lives simultaneously.

Prayer: Awe-some and amazing and always present God, awaken me to Your truth this day I pray. Amen.



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Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.” Luke 6:47-49

I remember in Sunday School, I learned the song, “The Wise Man Built his House upon the Rock.” Looking back, perhaps it is not the most child-friendly song ever. Imagine fifteen children, who were called the Cherub's Choir yet we were anything but, belting out, “The rains came down and the flood came up...the rains came down and flood came up...the rains came down and the flood came up...and the house on the sand went splat!” I am not sure if I learned more about scripture in that moment or the importance of a really good insurance policy. Maybe both?

For me, I am constantly reminded that it is not up to me to make the rock, but rather my choice is where I will build today. Will I choose to build my life this day upon Christ's love and God's grace and the Spirit's wisdom? Or will I instead let the other voices claiming and clamoring to be 'wisdom' be the foundation for what I say and do? Will I take time to listen to God's still singing

voice within me? Or will I race and run through my day until everything is blurry? Will I let God's wisdom interrupt what I am doing? Will I learn from my foolish moments OR will I cling to my certainty?

Those questions are not just for this day, but rather every day. I pray that the reflections this week have helped you and you have found something each day to be meaningful. I pray you will continue to be aware of how God's wisdom is different than human's wisdom. I pray you will be aware of what you are consuming...and what is consuming you. Finally, that you are aware of the foundation of faith on which you are building right here and now.

May the wisdom, love, grace, peace, and presence of God be with you now more than ever.

Prayer: Let Your wisdom be a light to my path and a lamp that guides what I say and do this day. Amen.