

Proverbs 3:1-13 BPC Evensong 141012 Andrew Jablonski

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, it's such an inspiring verse so I wanted to look at our reading from proverbs partly because you don't often get a sermon from Proverbs and also because I was somewhat surprised on a visiting a primary school recently to find that none of the children knew what a proverb was or were able to tell me a proverb. In my childhood children seemed to be fed proverbs with their mother's milk, "a stitch in time saves nine", "too many cooks spoil the broth" "two wrongs don't make a right". And as Anne said when she brought me a cup of coffee the other day "actions speak louder than words". Jesus used proverbs; in Luke "Physician heal thyself", "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather." Eric Cantona's version of this was "When the **seagulls** follow the trawler, it is because they think sardines will be thrown into the sea"

Cervantes in Don Quixote described proverbs as "short sentences drawn from long experience". Another declared they have three qualities "shortness, sense and salt"

Proverbs has the heading "The proverbs of Solomon", The Hebrew word for Proverb is masal also translated as sayings and is defined as drawing from personal and collective memory and experience. They are sayings designed to provoke a response. Yet Proverbs is much more than a collection of sayings as in today's passage. It is a book about wisdom, practical knowledge, instruction in righteous living, guidance

and planning. It is both for the simple and for those who are wise to grow in understanding. Today's passage does include a few examples of what we would know as Proverbs. "don't be wise in your own eyes. "The Lord disciplines those he loves".

The book of proverbs Chaps 1-9 resemble a series of lectures. The central section has sentence proverbs, then the book ends with poems of praise including the final passage on the virtuous wife. "Who can find a virtuous wife, for her worth is far more than rubies" There are 7 definite sections in Proverbs each with a heading, some indicate collections of proverbs from others such as "the wise". Some of the sayings have similarities in writings before the time of Solomon so it is quite possible that significant parts came from Solomon, though there are indications that it might have been arranged into this current form after the exile, after 500bc.

Solomon was famous for wisdom but did not grow in wisdom rather the opposite. The purpose of proverbs is to help us grow in wisdom and the knowledge of God.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, fools despise wisdom and instruction. A right relationship is standing in awe of our almighty God. Not just the fear of God but the fear of Yahweh. Knowing what I am and who I am. The fear of the one and only God Yahweh, revealed in the Bible.

Hear my child your father's instruction and your mother's teaching. Wisdom needs to be trained and taught. Intuitive understanding of risk in young males is apparently only really

fully developed by mid twenties. Harvard Neurologists have found that a crucial part of the brain – the frontal lobes – are not fully connected in teenagers (certainly teenage males) the part of the brain that says – is this a good idea? Many have observed this for millennia and this has also be known about for decades by car insurance companies. So the idea of imparting wisdom was giving short memorable phrases that the youth might remember.

In Proverbs, wisdom is not detached from morality. The first instruction in Proverbs 1 is – do not join in with the conspiracy of sinners – bad company ruins good morals. Because important connections in the brain are still being made through teenage years into mid-twenties what we do is particularly important.

In our passage we had two sections both beginning, “My son do not”. The first section includes 5 admonitions and the second is about the blessings of wisdom personified in female form. The name of the LORD appears 3 times in each section. The prominence is given to Yahweh. It is Yahweh who is to be trusted, feared and honoured. It is the teaching of parents and the discipline of Yahweh that together offer sound judgement and discernment.

3 benefits of long life, prosperity shalom and good reputation are benefits described but they are not the ends, but come as the result of effort in seeking wisdom and living wisely.

- Do not forget my teaching but let your heart keep my commandments -Teaching and commandments. Parent's responsibility for a parent to teach God's commandments and teaching. Children were not to be neglected by Israel –.

Every child is created in the image of God and is to be taught about God and to know Him – every child is to be taught

Deut 11:8 – keeping the commandments of God – God's people in God's land but not an automatic process

5th Commandment – honour your father and your mother that your days might be long in the land – the first commandment with a promise. Parents teaching the law of God.

- (let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you) Keep love and faithfulness bound around your neck

Steadfast love and faithfulness – these describe the nature of God – when God revealed himself to Moses it was as love and faithfulness. Characteristics of God are to be ours – and these will give us favour and success with God and people

Jesus increased in wisdom and in favour with God and man Luke 2. The characteristics that we want our friends and neighbours – and they want you to have.

- Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.

This verse is often used for a warrant for making decisions that go against one's own judgement. "It seemed crazy but I felt the Lord's leading". Now it is true that at times God's guidance can lead us in unexpected directions I don't believe that is actually the main thrust of this famous verse. The passage implores the hearer, "My son" to build into their life the wisdom and knowledge of God, avoid their fantasies of self and gain the benefits of Godly life, honour and shalom in their life.

All your heart – All your ways acknowledge him – no double mindedness – no half heartedness – you cannot serve God and money. Trusting The LORD is not just a nice idea.

Deut 11:13 – if you serve him with all your life and soul – then I will give you rain and fruit. If you serve God you will remain in this land. Acknowledge God at harvest time. God will bring rain in due season. The wealth was not theirs' it was given by God. Wealth is a funny thing. We build up our assets.

So we have the verse: honour the LORD with your wealth and with the first fruits of your harvest; about the benefits of overflowing Vats but this doesn't explain problems.

Now there is a problem that this is used for a prosperity gospel - If you give more generously you will be blessed in your businesses. The honouring the LORD is to acknowledge that what we have comes from him. Living in the fear of the LORD

- Don't be wise in your own sight healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones James 3:13 who is wise and understanding – if you have selfish ambition in your heart there will be disorder and every vile practice
- Do not despise the LORD's discipline the father reproveth the son in whom he delights. raising a child can be difficult – the father who never warns his son doesn't love him.

Wisdom is not just information but is the skill to live. We are to enquire. Proverbs – go to the ant and consider her ways. We look at a world that works. Single minded to our commitment to God and his wisdom.

Blessed is the one who finds wisdom – she is more precious than fine jewels – nothing you desire can compare with her. Those who hold her fast are called blessed. Her ways are pleasant – so we are seeking to follow God daily in all our life.

We are implored to seek, to do and to hold fast. May we seek God with all our hearts and more and more be in awe and wonder at his beauty, love and holiness and know how he delights in each one of us.