

## “Foolishness” Sermon for September 16, 2018

Proverbs 1:20-33, James 3:1-12

Sermon Text, 1 Corinthians 1:21, 25a, NIV

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.... For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom,.. . .”

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The 19<sup>th</sup> Psalm reminds us that there are many sources in the world whereby we may know God, but each of them requires divine wisdom. The mature believer is one who can discern God’s reality in the world simply by listening to the inaudible speech declared by creation. But apart from that, the Psalmist also assures us:

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.  
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the foolish.  
8 The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.  
9 The reverence of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.  
10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.  
11 By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Our goal is wisdom through God’s divinely inspired Word of God. We want the words of our own mouths

and the meditations of our own hearts, to always be acceptable in God's sight. We take James' warning seriously concerning the dangers of our tongues, or our words, and the need to have God's word, God's ways, God's thoughts and God's values reflected in all that we say and do.

We are foolish. We cannot tame the tongue, but daily meditating on God's word can give us an alternative mind, alternative intentions, alternative thoughts and alternative behaviors, which seasoned by the wisdom of God rather than the foolishness of our human hearts will be acceptable to God. For indeed, the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom.

In Proverbs we are guided by: the teacher, figured as a father speaking to his son or offspring, along with Wisdom herself, who becomes "incarnate" as the valorous wife and mother of 31:10-31. These are

the two wise "parents" who give birth to strong daughters and sons of God. Wisdom is, as the mother, the source of God's mind and will! Wisdom also a prophet. Her first speech is straightforward. No namby-pamby, yes and no rhetoric. The opening verses (1:20-21) locate Wisdom in the midst of society's hustle and bustle. She hawks her wares where everyone can hear -- on the busiest corner and at the city gates. The irony is that so few people do listen to her voice. We know those who heed Wisdom are few in number because she addresses her audience as "simple ones," "scoffers," and "fools," and describes them as loving and delighting in such behavior while hating knowledge (verse 22).

Did not Jesus say in Matthew:

<sup>13</sup> Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: <sup>14</sup> Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it (7:13-14).

Wisdom's audience in the Proverb has refused to hear her call and has not heeded her outstretched hand (verse 24). We have ignored all her counsel (verse 25a), and, indeed, would have none of her discipline (verse 25b). Wisdom is, after all, on the busiest corner where everyone can hear. Everyone can, but not everyone will. No one can come to the Christ, Holy Wisdom, unless drawn by the Spirit. There is a statute of limitations on such important matters. One cannot live foolishly, godlessly, forever without reaping the "benefits." Indeed the Epistle to the Hebrews (3:14-15, 19) warns us:

*We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."... So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.*

Wisdom's statements about laughing (verse 26) and not listening (verse 28) are bracketed by "because-clauses." Note the structure:

because I called and you refused... (verse 24)

and because you ignored my counsel... (verse 25)

Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof.... (verses 29-30)

This structure indicates that Wisdom's posture is actually caused by the foolishness of the fools. She is not hoping that they fail so she can laugh. The improper behavior in question is not Wisdom's laughter or mockery, but the audience's foolishness. The matters at hand, therefore, are deeply practical and spiritual. Foolish behavior, in the end, is not just foolish, it is a failure to hear and see God.

When we were children, our family physician used to ask us to stick out our tongues. He seemed to be able to tell a great deal about our health by looking into our mouths. That is a parable of spiritual reality.

Sanctification according to Colossians 3:1–4:

*3 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on things of the earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your<sup>[a]</sup> life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

I don't know if God's word to us can be any clearer. The question before us is whether we will choose to hear the heavens and hear the word, hear wisdom or our own foolishness. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.