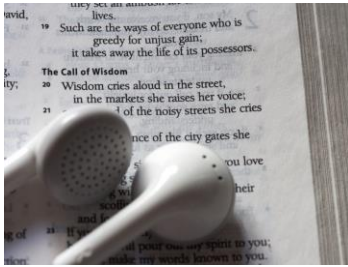


The Reality of Wisdom

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31



Wisdom, in Proverbs

is not an idea to be grasped
or a moral slogan that can be printed
on trendy pineapple patterned stationary.

Wisdom is feminine,

and she is personified as one who calls to us
not in a still small voice
within the private chambers of our heart.

Wisdom does **not**
call us in the study carols
of the world's best libraries;
she does **not** raise her voice
in the silence of our prayer closets.

Wisdom does **not** offer herself privy
to the few who work hard and diligently;

**Wisdom offers herself openly
to everyone and everything.**

Wisdom is calling

in the public square down town;
she is at the city gates
putting up her billboard on Hwys 40, 321 and 16;
she is at every door and threshold
beckoning to all,
all that lives.

And it seems she is sharing her truth:

that she is prevenient
and embodies age that seems ageless
—having been the first
of God's creative endeavors:

“the Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.”

Her truth is that she has always
worked alongside God:
“then I was beside him like a master worker.”

She is play and creativity,
she is a delight to God,
and
like the Lord God,
she delights in us.

Some might think of Wisdom
as the pearl of great price.
Most of the time
when we talk about wisdom
we, who are thinkers and feelers,
we are either seeking Wisdom’s discernment
as our personal benefit;
or we are ready to dispense wisdom
on others and their situations.

Our consumerism infiltrates
even the sacred desire for wisdom.
And then again
there are times when think
we have to work hard to attain wisdom;
again, as if she were something
to be grasped only in the mind and heart.

But perhaps you’ve heard the phrase,
‘knowledge is acquired, wisdom is revealed’?

Wisdom, knowledge, insight,
they all share a common thread for us.
But here in scripture
Wisdom goes beyond
what we might consider the conventional
—beyond something gained, attained or dispensed.

Wisdom according to the book of Proverbs
permeates our reality.
The poetry of it all is breathtaking.



She was there
when the earth's foundations were dug
and set in place.
She was there when God told the waters
to only go this far,
mapping out the shore lines and beaches;
she was there
in the swirling chaos
of creativity and energy and inspiration
before the earth (maybe the cosmos) were formed,
before there were even bits of soil!
This is certainly a revelation,
to tendency to our limited perceptions, right?

I asked for wisdom
from the hive mind.
And there were revelations.
Though it may sound trite,
someone shared this with me,
"You have to accept the fact
that sometimes you are the pigeon
and sometimes you are the statue."

I'll give you a minute with that
if you need it.

Thank you, Claude Chabrol French filmmaker,
—and it is the truth.
When I crowdsourced for my sermon

on Facebook this week,
asking about wisdom,
many of you gave great responses.

And then again there were a lot of responses,
that bordered on cliché
and seemed more like 'pithy slogans'.¹

My question was inadvertently perhaps set up
to give me those kinds of responses:
tell me the best wisdom you've received
or what is a piece of wisdom
you'd like to pass on.

And lots of people answered with conventional wisdom
saying things like,
"Nothing good happens after midnight,"
"to each his or her own,"
and "everyone is weird"
(though again I'm not sure if that is cliché or just a fact).

What we define as wisdom in our lives,
as is interesting;
lots of the wisdom responses
shared with me were either
sayings from trusted family members
or conventional wisdom,
idioms that Americans love.

Our conventional wisdom is usually
"defined as ideas so accepted
they go unquestioned.
Unfortunately, conventional wisdom
is often wrong."²

We can say things like,
nothing good happens after midnight

¹ *Pithy Slogans* is borrowed language from Tom Long

² <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/9-bits-of-conventional-wisdom-you-should-ignore/>

—but that's not really true
if your child was born at 2am.
Taking a nod to our health,
we used to think it was wise
to skip the butter

—how many of us remember
the brown tub of Country Crock on your table—
thank goodness we are wiser,
butter really is better!

We say wisdom comes with age
and there is truth to that
—as most of feel that our 30-year-old selves
make better decisions
and have a better sense our reality
than our 15-year-old selves did.

The thing is almost everyone
has a set of guiding principles
in which they use in their everyday lives.
We, as Americans, have national proverbs
like, *the early bird gets the worm*
and, *you've got to pull yourself up*
by your own boot straps.

Most of our national conventional wisdom
celebrates the individual
and borders on apathetic.
Live and let live,
don't rock the boat,
different strokes for different folks.

Tom Long calls our most loved national proverbs
the postmodern verbal shoulder shrug of, ***whatever!***³

But that kind of wisdom
is completely different
than what we encounter
when it comes to biblical wisdom.

³ Doug Bratt following the leading of Scott Hoezee, https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/trinity-sunday-c/?type=old_testament_lectionary

If we take Proverbs' lead
and think of Wisdom not just as
the quintessential bumper sticker slogan
but also, as personified essence
of play and creativity
then we'd have warrant listening to
our poets, artists and rebels.
We'd have to listen to your young people
and our elders;
our innovators and introverts.

We would see
that in our own creativity
is a hint of the Divine Creator
who created all things along side of Wisdom:
"I was beside God,
I was a master worker."



We sense that with Wisdom's acting in creating,
she feeds our continued sense creativity.
And so an element of wisdom
would be that willingness
to take the risk that goes against
the *whatever* mentality
that is so prevalent in our culture.

Mark Twain, reportedly said,
"Whenever you find yourself
on the side of the majority,
it is time to pause and reflect."

Wisdom, biblical Wisdom, Proverbial Wisdom,
calls us to take the risk
of seeing reality in a different way.

Biblical Wisdom should shape our reality;
she saturates our reality according to Proverbs.

Adam Oakley sent me a podcast this week called,
Unmistakable Creative:
and the episode was called,
Exploring the Boundaries of Reality
with T.K. Coleman.

And here's the wisdom that T.K. Coleman revealed:
"How you see reality
is a matter of life and death."⁴
And if we can see,
with Proverbs that Wisdom is intimately,
unmistakably bound up
in every aspect of our world,
she will affect our notion
of how we see reality.

T.K. Coleman explains,
"that every aspect
of what you would call the quality of life
boils down to the little choices
that you make to cultivate
a quality of consciousness
that is conducive to things like
personal power or peace
or whatever labels we use
to talk about flourishing life."⁵

⁴ <https://unmistakablecreative.com/podcast/exploring-the-boundaries-of-reality-with-tk-coleman/>

⁵ *ibid*, T.K. Coleman



Flourishing life,
is the poetry of Wisdom's existence
in Proverbs.

Flourishing life is what we believe
our Creator God wants for everything from,
African dung beetles
to fruit flies and slugs;
flourishing life is what the Creator
built into the design of creation
whether you are a hairless sphynx cat
or a peach tree;

flourishing life is the life blood of wisdom
if you are English lavender
or a waitress named Tammy
working at Waffle House.

How we view reality,
how we make choices in our lives
to cultivate flourishing life,
is a matter of life and death.

It is no accident that any of us are here
—and I'm not getting
on a high theological horse to say that—
but each and everyone of us,
was given the opportunity
and the wisdom—the play and creativity—
to impact the world.

We are not here
to just breathe the universe's air, T.K. Coleman asserts,
we are not here to throw up our hands
and claim, that *whatever* works
—we live for a purpose.

Our lives lived in faith
are ultimately about living our reality
with a sense of possibility.
The possibility that there is always more
than that which seems obvious.

Wisdom's call is to see our reality
as more than meaningless existence
and individual gain.

Wisdom's call to all that lives,
is a life that flourishes with possibility.
And if we live with a sense of possibility,
what can we be other than creators?⁶

What can we be other than artists,
and poets, and rebels
against the conventional consumerism wisdom
of our moment in time?

The Book of Proverbs
offers a glimpse into the possibility
of living a wise existence.
It is founded on the premise
that life adds up to something coherent and good,
stable and full of shalom
because there is a Creator God
who made each person and each thing.

Further, God made each person
and each thing
to work in certain ways
so that if everybody functions
the way they were made to function,
life would get webbed together
into a marvelously complex,
inter-locking system of mutual affirmation.⁷

⁶ *ibid*, T.K. Coleman

⁷ Tom Long, quoted by Scott Hoezee, in Doug Bratt's article Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-

31 https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/trinity-sunday-c/?type=old_testament_lectionary

Flourishing life.

Wisdom calls out to us,
rejoicing in the beautiful complexity
of this inhabited world
and delights in the human race.

Mary Oliver says,
“This is the first,
the wildest, and the wisest thing I know:
that the soul exists
and is built entirely out of attentiveness.”

How we are attentive our reality;
how we see reality
is a matter of life and death.
This is the reality of wisdom
the reality of our shared inheritance
of Wisdom living in and around us.
This is her call to us.

She is in everything we know,
and she can inform all that we do.
“To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.”