

# The Big Decision (7:30 am Service)

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Preacher: The Venerable Daniel Gifford

[ 0 : 00 ] As we stand, let us pray together. Father in heaven, thank you. We thank you for the Holy Spirit that we have just said we believe in. We ask for your Holy Spirit to open your word to us, making it for us to be a living word that changes and transforms us, strengthen us, give us great hope in you, and lead us into your paths, the paths of wisdom.

In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. Well, it's very good to be with you as we are entering into this series on the book of Proverbs.

It's a marvelous book. It's different. And I was having coffee with a friend of mine, a Jewish friend of mine, who used to live next door and sadly moved a couple miles away, but we get together.

And I told him we were doing this sermon series on Proverbs, and his eyes lit up. And I said, well, why do you like Proverbs? Why is it so important to you? And he says, well, it is God telling us to heed what he says, not just to listen or to hear, but to heed, to really listen actively to what God is doing.

And it's about remembering who he is for us. It brings it to your heart. And he says, you know, it's very poetic, and it's a musical book because it's easier to remember music and poetry.

[ 1 : 29 ] And it is very important for us indeed because it is not just telling us this is the way that you need to live, but it is saying that this is the way into the good life that God has for you.

And so that's why you see all these promises here in verses, in all the even number verses in this Proverbs. If you turn to Proverbs 3 and 528, you'll see. All the even verses are promises.

For length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. He will make straight your paths, verse 6.

Verse 8, it will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. Verse 10, then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine.

And then 12, the Lord reproves him whom he loves as a father the son in whom he delights. And those promises are from the king to his son.

[ 2 : 31 ] It's not saying that all people are going to have their vats of wine filled up in barns because most people don't have those things. And we won't see perfect justice, the end of sickness and death and no more scarcity in this world.

All you want, all the time. But what this is saying is that as you walk according to God's wisdom in every aspect of your life, you will understand that health, our finances, our goodness in relationships all come from God's hand.

They are all gifts to us. And because of Jesus, we know that there is the life to come where all is fulfilled and all is made right.

It is this understanding that all that is good and perfect comes from God himself. It is seeing God in his glory. I loved when we were reading this psalm. I just noticed this today.

It's amazing how often wisdom is talked about in the scriptures. But here it says an unwise person does not well consider that the Lord is glorious in his works and that his thoughts are very deep.

[ 3 : 42 ] An unwise person doesn't consider that. But a wise person sees the greatness of God, who he is for you in this life. And so the good life, it's not a reward for walking in the way of wisdom.

It's really a benefit. It is a gift that comes as you walk with him, as you are in the place of relationship with God. There's fruit that comes on that path.

It's just part of being on that path. Last week, I received a gift of homemade blackberry jam from somebody. And of course, the question I asked them was, what did you have to sacrifice to pick those blackberries?

Are there big scratches all over you in making this gift? And she said, no, I have a friend who has blackberries near their backyard. And you just go in a path, you walk along, and you just easily pick

off the blackberries at the certain time of year.

And you see, for her, there was great benefits in being there on that path. It is just where the good fruit was. And you wouldn't have found that walking down Granville Avenue, as far as I know, driving down there every day.

[ 4 : 55 ] I don't see blackberries. But you see, this is an illustration of the fruit of the promises of God. His goodness is a necessary part. It's the necessary fruit of walking on his path, the path of wisdom.

And so chapter 3 is very helpful for us because it's an introduction to practical wisdom. Because the wisdom of the Bible is very relational. It's about being vulnerable to God, risking for him in the nitty-gritty, the down-to-earth things in my life.

The everyday occurrences. It's about being vulnerable to him, risking for him. It's a very personal and intimate chapter. That's why you can see it starts by the father speaking to the son, Solomon speaking to his beloved son.

And we are brought into that family relationship with God in this chapter. He speaks tenderly to you in this chapter.

He's inviting you to take hold of his wisdom, to embrace it. And there's only one reason he wants that. It is because he knows what is best for his son.

[ 6 : 12 ] He wants the very, very best for him. And that is what he is doing. He's wanting us to embrace his love for you, his direction in your life.

And so it's very practical. How do I walk in the path of wisdom? Well, there's three things that I want to point out in this short sermon. One is he calls us to remember.

He calls us to rely. And he calls us to reflect. And I want to look at these three things.

First, remember. Verse 1 says, My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your hearts keep my commandment. You see, the wisdom says there's two fundamental ways to live.

You either acknowledge God or you forget God. Either you will desire to do what God wants and direct your life according to his ways, or you will push him in the back corner of your life to try to ignore him.

[ 7 : 22 ] We can have our own measuring stick very easily, the measuring stick of the world. God doesn't come into it. And we can actually do this in a kind of a Christian way, in Christian language.

It's very easy to go through great stretches of time without remembering what God has said and keeping him in the background and to make decisions without referring to him.

I love this verse because it says, Let your heart keep commandments. There's a sense of gladness in following God's ways, in following his wisdom.

You probably don't remember this, but last week in our collect, we prayed this, which just comes right into our passage. It says, Almighty and everlasting God, give us an increase in faith, hope, and charity, and that we may obtain that which thou dost promise.

Make us to love that which thou dost command. Isn't that marvelous? It's a prayer asking God to help us to love the things that he commands.

[ 8 : 29 ] Because God's promises are fulfilled in him, in Jesus. And our heart's desire in this prayer becomes to do what God wants in our life.

It's the beginning of all wisdom. There's a deep motivation here to daily read God's word with an obedient heart. It's the way that you love the things that God commands and don't forget.

So keep reading. Keep reading with an obedient heart that you can love the things that God has commanded. So that's the beginning of wisdom. It is to remember, first of all.

And secondly, it is to reflect. Look at verse 2. It says, Let not, and reflecting, I don't mean thinking about something. I mean reflecting like a mirror reflects to you.

So it says, Don't let steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart. Now what that's saying is that the steadfast love and the faithfulness is actually a characteristic of God.

[ 9 : 37 ] It's the central character of the God of the Bible. It's the light of God. Then over and over again in the Old Testament, you will hear God spoken of one who is full of steadfast love.

And he is also one that is completely faithful, even when his people are unfaithful. And we see this in the New Testament too, because that is what the gospel is all about.

It is about the faithfulness of God sending his son to die for the sins of the world that they might live. And it is the steadfast love of God that moves him to send that son into the world.

So this passage is saying, Be a reflector of that grace of God, of the character of God. I don't know how many of you saw the eclipse exactly a month ago.

The eclipse where the moon came between the earth and the sun. It was very interesting to see. I happened to be with my brother-in-law who had the welding shields.

[10:46] You can look through. He had three of them, oddly enough. And so there's our family looking through these welding shields up at the eclipse. It was really amazing to see it. And I think this is a helpful illustration, because you can see in that way how the moon can either be a block to the sun or a reflector of the sun.

And that's our life as well. You know, we can actually kind of darken who God is, or we can reflect who God is to the world around us.

And that's what this verse is telling us to be. If you bind God's steadfast love and faithfulness, if you wear it around your neck like a necklace, he says, it means your behavior will reflect God's grace.

And as you write those things on your heart, your thoughts and your motivations in your heart will also reflect God. They will be shaped by his Holy Spirit. And it is wonderful that the Holy Spirit does this for us as we believe in Jesus.

It binds his love and faithfulness to our hearts. Those words, bind and write, are remembering words again. You see, otherwise we drift.

[11:58] We can easily forsake that love and that faithfulness, as this verse says. And so wisdom is about every day reflecting God's steadfast love, his faithfulness.

We will love God and do his will, therefore. Love people and seek God's best for them. That's what it means to reflect those things in our life. And there's an effect on the world as we reflect Jesus in this way.

Your relationship with God will actually change the way you relate to the world around you. And that's why it says you will find favor in the sight of God and man.

It is really the way that we bless the world. It happens when you walk in the way of wisdom, that reflecting of God's grace. And then finally, I close by having called us to remember God's word, calling us to reflect on his, reflect his grace to the world.

Wisdom finally means to rely on God, trust in him completely. I want you to turn to verse 5 and 6. And I want us to actually read this together.

[13:08] They are memorable words. These are words worth memorizing if you have not done this before. But let's read verses 5 and 6 together. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. These are powerful words. This is the kernel of wisdom, of God's wisdom.

It is a wholehearted commitment to the God of the Bible. Trust with your heart means the choices that we make. In all our ways acknowledge God, our ways are our outward actions.

And that word acknowledge is a word of relational intimacy. It's not like sort of nodding to somebody that you know, acknowledging. It's actually in everything we are, doing them out of a love for God and seeking his presence in them.

It's a call to really take personal, very personal risks to obey God because we love him. It's very relational. It makes us very vulnerable. And this is something that we all sort of wobble on.

[14:23] It's something that's not easy at all. And it's because in life, there's no person that we commit our families and our careers or our futures to.

We don't rely on anybody like that. And we carry this on in our Christian thinking as well, that we want to be responsible, which is a good thing. But that turns into saying we want advice from God, but I don't want to completely rely on him.

But verse 5 and 6 is so challenging for us because it says the whole focus of life is taking God at his word and actually leaning all your weight on him.

There is a sense of not being in control in that way. It's seeking God's wisdom in every moment of major decision and all the things that are important in your life.

And I want to drive this home by looking at the practical ways, practical examples of the ways that this passage calls us to rely on God.

[15:29] They're the odd number of verses. It says, don't be wise in your own eyes. In other words, don't take those things into your hands, but actually come to him in prayer. Prayer is so essential here, isn't it?

To rely on God necessarily means that we pray. If you are not praying, you are not relying on God. We're meeting as a church a week from tomorrow to pray, to show that we rely on God. We acknowledge him in all of our ways. And we don't rely on our own understanding alone. Be not wise in your own eyes. Verse 9, honor the Lord with your wealth. Our identity, our security is our wealth. And it says, honor God with that. First of all, bring him into it. And maybe even the hardest one is verse 11 of relying on God. Don't despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof. Throughout Proverbs, you hear that the fool is one who doesn't let God correct them. But the wise one who listens to that Lord's discipline and responds to it and knows, as that promise said at the beginning, that it is God's love being poured out on us. [16:41] That he would redirect us into his paths through sometimes very difficult things in our life. So I want to close by saying, you know, this passage calls us to true and godly wisdom. To ask the question always, where am I not trusting him or acknowledging him? How can I more and more put my full weight upon him, rely upon him alone? It is a passage that moves you to look always up as well. To Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of your faith. To the God who has loved you completely and is perfectly faithful to you all the time. As it says in verse 14, in chapter 4, get wisdom. Find it. Go after it. There's an urgency about it. And wisdom will place on your head a graceful garland. She will bestow on you a beautiful crown. Amen.