

Wisdom Calling (Proverbs 8)

In Proverbs 8, wisdom is described as a person calling us to follow her. But where does she call from and who is she and why does it matter so much that we follow her?

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen

It's always encouraging when preparing for a sermon when you read: 'chapter 8 is the most difficult and profound chapter in the book of proverbs' no pressure.

But let's not be put off by its complexity and difficulty at face value, because it is worth exploring the riches that are inside this book and this chapter helps us as we begin a series on wise living to think carefully about wisdom. Wisdom herself is speaking.

In starting a series on wise living, it helps us to ask questions about Where we seek our advice from, where is our compass set, what directs the choices we make. What voices do we listen to? The Sunday school answer is Jesus. But are other voices louder, do other voices capture our attention more?

The world around us is full of advice, self-help books, different religions. But here in proverbs we have a wisdom from God to listen to. A wisdom for the whole of life, a wisdom for everyone. It might have been written in the ancient world, but it is as relevant for us now.

Chapter 1 sets the scene for the entire book of proverbs - The NIV gives these verses I'm about to read the title - purpose and theme - these are the words: from chapter 1 verses 1-7.

The proverbs of Solomon son of David King of Israel: for learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight, for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice and equity; to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young - let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire a skill, to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The verse that comes just after our proverbs reading today, (our opening verse), echoes that sentiment found in the opening chapter - listen to my instruction and be wise do not disregard it.

In ch. 7 the author urges its readers to shun the strange woman whose words are folly and then here we are in ch. 8, being told to listen to wisdom. This wisdom is far beyond anything else or anyone else.

In v1-3 it is announced that wisdom is calling. She has a message. We're told that wisdom is all around them - on the heights (the highest point on the way), at the crossroads (where the paths meet), beside the gates leading into the town. She is there. Wisdom is calling, let's not be foolish let's listen to what she says.

The writer wants us to pay attention to the location of wisdom in these opening verses. the use of path has been used earlier in the book and is used as a metaphor for our life journey. It is telling the readers that wisdom can be met and encountered in their daily lives. The entrance to the cities marks the border between city and countryside and encompasses all those in those regions. This tells us that Her message is for everyone. The gate also in the ancient world was a place of important

decision making. This is from where wisdom speaks. The scene is being set about the importance of encountering wisdom.

So wisdom is calling to those in her hearing. It's not a whisper, she cries out. And In verses 5-11 which we haven't read this morning wisdom talks about her desire for humans to acquire for themselves prudence (cautiousness - being cautious), intelligence, instruction and wisdom. Throughout the book of proverbs there are comparisons between wisdom and folly (lack of good sense - foolishness).

In v12-21 she introduces herself and shows her character - in v14 she says she owns good advice, resourcefulness, understanding and strength. They are part of her. These are characteristics of God. Wisdom and God are connected by their very nature.

In v17 we are informed that wisdom is not hard to find, not hard to attain but must be pursued.

Do we pursue wisdom.? This to my mind Rings a bell with Jesus own words 'Matthew 7:7-8' Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Jesus words are in relation to prayer. But Wisdom also here is something we're told to pursue - to ask God for. King Solomon asked God for wisdom so that he would rule his people well. (1 kings 3:1-15) Wisdom wants her hearers to pursue her to ask for her.

Who is wisdom? Wisdom is aligning herself with God and creation In v22-31. The words are beautifully poetic. Describing creation and wisdoms presence within it.

In V 23 Wisdom says she was around before the creation of the world. This reminds me of the beginning of Genesis 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.'

In verses 24-29 she talks about her presence when God created - when there were no deeps, when the mountains were settled.

And in verse 30 to 31 she goes further and says she was the architect of creation - 'then I was beside him like a master worker and I was daily his delight rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.'

What are the reasons given as to why we should listen? Who is she? Wisdom has been personified in this chapter and there is much belief and evidence that wisdom is used to depict God the Holy Spirit. At work in the world in and around us.

Wisdom shares God's characteristics and was with him in the beginning. There is also a connection between wisdom and Jesus. In the NT Jesus is seen as personification of Old Testament wisdom - Jesus was God's word/wisdom made flesh (John 1:1-3), he too was involved in creation and sustaining the world (Col. 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:2-3) just as wisdom is depicted as doing here.

Our God is father, son and Holy Spirit and proverbs 8 gives insight into the work of the Holy Spirit. Wisdom in the world. God's wisdom through his Holy Spirit is in you, it's in me, it's in all of us who have asked Jesus to be king of our lives, to have his spirit in us. The bible shows us who He is and the wisdom he imparts.

Another aspect of Wisdom being Gods spirit in the world and one that excites me is the phrase used in v24 for wisdom being bought forth - it is translated as whirling, dancing. I like the idea of Wisdom, Gods spirit dancing throughout creation, throughout our lives. Guiding us and being God with us.

These words of wisdom that we'll discover in proverbs and elsewhere in the bible for that matter don't come from a stuffy kill joy God but a God who through the Spirit is actively at work, dancing with us weaving her wisdom through the tapestry of our lives. Gods spirit is within us. And because of that we have access to this wisdom and we are to use it to encourage each other, build each other up, help each other in this journey of life. Making wise choices in every aspect of life we live.

From digging into this passage in proverbs I'm reminded of these words from the letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:11-16 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

That is why we need wisdom - Gods voice is to be the loudest guiding and directing - so let's listen and let's act on it - that we would be transformed in the priorities of our lives and how we live them, with Gods spirit weaving through life with us. Let's spend time studying reflecting praying.