



August 2, 2022

Wisdom Calls To Us

By The Rev. Sam Sheridan

Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
“To you, O people, I call,
And my cry is to all that live...
I love those who love me,
And those who seek me diligently find me.”
Proverbs 8:1-4, 17

As a Sewanee graduate, I can attest that the question we are forever asking one another is, “How then shall we live?” It’s a biblical question – not one that Sewanee came up with. Ezekiel did. Songs and books are written about this question.

“How then shall we live?” is the ultimate question for someone who believes in God. Given what we’ve done wrong, all we’ve learned, everything we know about God’s love and grace – “How then shall we live?”

Most of the Book of Proverbs is short, well, proverbs. They are anecdotes and phrases demonstrating wisdom as it was seen by the ancient authors. It is a text often skimmed for discursive, *non sequitur* vignettes, anecdotes, or aphorisms. It is just as likely to be quoted when someone wants to add biblical gravitas to an Instagram post as it is when someone is looking to make scripture seem outdated or ridiculous. If you’ve tried to study it, Proverbs seems to be contextualized to an ancient and far off place even more than the rest of the Bible. Can’t we read something with a little more story line or a little more substance?

There is, though, a story. The book of Proverbs begins by introducing symbolic characters. There is a wise and fatherly king, a roguish trickster, a woman of folly, and a woman of wisdom.

It is this Wisdom who encourages us most as we wonder how to live. She is depicted as standing at the crossroads, at the gate, crying, imploring people to take the narrow road up to Zion rather than the wider path down to Gehenna (the burning trash pit, the outer darkness). She is an archetype we see and understand in Jesus. Jesus is the Way, and He describes the narrow gate, the narrow path, which leads to life, and the much broader path that leads to destruction.

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

Here, in Proverbs, is Wisdom standing at the crossroads, urging us to take the path that leads to life and here is Jesus, in the Gospels, urging us to take the same path. Both are urging us to trust in God’s wisdom. God’s wisdom is always crying out to us from the crossroads, beckoning us to go the way of life which is always love, charity, justice, mercy, and hope.

Even when we might think someone is beyond saving, it is our wisdom to proclaim that we can **all** turn back to God. When we feel someone has

earned our derision or vengeance, our inherited wisdom is that we should turn the other cheek. When we fall short in loving our neighbor as ourselves, Jesus' wisdom, taught to His disciples, is we need to both love our neighbor and ourselves. Loving ourselves is second only to loving God. And it is only second because God is from whom all love comes into being in the first place.

Wisdom calls to us. She stands at the crossroad of every decision, every moment in our lives. She invites us to set aside our fear, anger, pride and arrogance, lies, and harshness. She invites us to choose righteousness, justice, and love. She invites us to consider the very question of "How then shall we live?"

Jesus calls to us, too, asking the same kind of questions, inviting the same kinds of choices. Only, He is the question and the answer. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

How shall we live? By following Jesus.
This is the beginning and end of wisdom.
It is what we have to guide our lives.
It is what we have to offer the world.