

**Nothing to Dread**  
**Mark 8:27-35 and Proverbs 1:20-33**  
**12 September 2021**

I bet **every** one of you knows how **frustrating** it is to **not** be **heard**... **particularly** when you **know** that what you're saying is **important**... is **worth** hearing... could save someone some heartache... if **only** he or she would **listen** to what you're saying – like:

*You'd be way better off not drinking tonight.  
I'd sure watch what I said around her.  
Please, put down that cellphone and focus on driving!*

**Having** something to say... having wisdom to **share**... but no one willing or able to listen to you, can be maddening, even frightening sometimes. It's certainly **frustrating** – as I'm sure you know.

Now, I guess you **also** know the way that people with certain characteristics sometimes receive nick-names – like, a person who is small in stature may be called *Shorty*... or someone who's temperamental may get nick-named *Red*. Well, in today's reading from **Proverbs** we meet a Lady who is so **wise** that she goes by the name Sophia... *Wisdom*. And **she** appears to be fairly **frustrated**. **Seeing** people in **grave** peril, and **knowing** that they **wouldn't** be **if** they paid attention to her counsel, she **vents**: *How long will you love being simple? How long will you fools hate knowledge? I call you, and you refuse to listen. I stretch out my hand, and no one heeds!* And so, Boy O boy, are they **in** for it... **because** “*The simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them.*”

**Why** is it, I wonder, that people **do not hear** wisdom when it's **offered** – either yours... mine... or wisdom from above? Sometimes, I suppose, people don't **hear** the voice of wisdom because of all the other **competing** voices sounding off around them. If you're calling out to someone in the marketplace – think Walmart on a Saturday morning – chances are, your words may well be lost in the din. Sometimes, it's just too **noisy** for folks to hear the important stuff.

Sometimes, however, people don't **hear** wisdom because they don't **want** to hear it. They may suffer from “selective hearing loss” – they can hear the **football** game just fine but not the spouse who says, *You'd better not eat that*. Or, it could be that “they can't handle the truth.” So, they **won't** hear the **scientist** saying, *The world is warming up and we're at the tipping point*. Or the **prophet** proclaiming

that *When you sow injustice you will reap the whirlwind*. Or the **politician** warning that *Instead of promoting our security we are only making others more determined to destroy us*. There are things that plenty of us really don't **want** to hear.

I'm pretty sure that Peter did not **want** to hear Christ saying that he was going to suffer and be killed... **and** Peter probably didn't **relish** hearing that to follow Jesus **he** would need to take up a cross and lose his **own** life. I **sense** that Peter was **filtering** what he was hearing from Christ. And sometimes we are, too.

And sometimes people don't hear **wisdom** because they are not **ready** to hear it. They may not know the language... or they aren't acquainted with the **concepts**... or they are not yet **mature** enough to wrap their minds around the ideas. I experience this sometimes when I'm with medical, or legal, or financial professionals who're discussing things. I "get" a little of what they're saying. I catch their drift. But I know it's going to take some time and effort before I understand what *cardio-myopathy* means... what *nolo contende* indicates... or what *fungibility* is. The bottom line is, there are **loads** of reasons why people **don't**, or **can't**, or **won't** hear wisdom when it's offered.

One thing the reading from Proverbs makes **clear**, however, is that wisdom... true wisdom... God's wisdom... is NOT missed by people because it **isn't** being **shared**. No, the passage assures us that wisdom is **available** in **more** than **sufficient** quantity. It is not being **withheld** from anyone... or **offered** only to the select few who have just the right genes or denominational affiliation. It's not the **province** of **the enlightened**, only. It is presented, made available, **everywhere**... in the midst of life... in the streets and shops and fields and forests... in the markets... at the city gates... in the schools... the courts... in the very places people come and go, every day... even here in church, sometimes! A person may **say** that he or she's clueless. But if so, it is NOT because wisdom **hasn't** been offered.

**Another** thing the passage lifts up is that there **are consequences** when you **hear and heed** wisdom... and consequences when you **won't**. Those who **won't** hear and heed wisdom's good counsel put **themselves at risk**... and sometimes **others**, too. But, those who **heed** wisdom are quite **likely** to find themselves in the position of dwelling **secure**... feeling as if they have nothing to dread. That's what Lady Wisdom says!

Now, Lady Wisdom offers wisdom on a whole range of issues and concerns. On: Relationships – *Let not loyalty and faithfulness forsake you*.

Labor – *Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.*

Commerce – *A false scale is an abomination to the Lord.*

Leadership – *Where there is no guidance, a people falls; but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.*

Home life – *Better is a dinner of herbs where there is love than a fatted ox where hatred is present.*

Lady Wisdom covers the whole waterfront! But if you were to search the book of Proverbs for one **foundational** word of wisdom... I believe that **deepest**, truest word of counsel would be: *Fear the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* Fear the Lord... or, in other words... **revere** the Lord. Have reverence for God. Stay aware of the Lord. Be worshipfully attentive to God's presence, God's working, God's will. Trust God. No matter what. Entrust yourself to the Lord God's keeping. That's the core of being wise. And, if you **don't** or **won't** entrust yourself to God, **when calamity** comes, you will **panic!** And **that** won't be good for **anyone**. Panic leads people to make bad decisions, to take foolish action.

**But**, Lady Wisdom **promises**, *Those who **listen** to wisdom will **dwell secure**.* Will dwell secure. Note – it's **not** that calamity, perils and challenges won't come for them, **too**. (In this world, they surely will.)

It's that, being **grounded** in God, **reverencing** the Holy One, trusting and waiting upon the Lord... **they will not panic** when these occur. **Instead**, they'll be thoughtful and faithful, brave and compassionate... wise and confident. They will dwell secure... even in challenging situations. **We will... if** we listen to Lady Wisdom's counsel.

Now in light of this, you would **think** that **we'd** be fairly **motivated** to help people **listen** to wisdom. We'd want to do all we could to help others develop their **capacity** for hearing and heeding wisdom.

To prevent **people**, like our children, from falling prey, we **should** be **eager** to acquaint them with God... to introduce them to Christ, to teach them his ways, to help them recognize his voice and to know that they can **trust** him to be close by when calamity comes.

And, we also should be eager to help people with "selective" hearing problems... giving them new ears for hearing God and new eyes for appreciating God.

And, if someone is unable to hear wisdom **because she is hungry** or hurting and distracted by this, we should be eager to address that condition **first**.

And, surely, we would want to help persons become more **discerning**... for there is so **much** being pitched and sold in this world that has nothing to do with wisdom... with the true wisdom **we're** becoming acquainted with **in Christ**... who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Years ago, E. B. White, the author of *Charlotte's Web*, wrote a piece for The New Yorker just before Christmas. In some large store in the city he'd observed a child and its mother shopping. The child, he wrote, reached out and picked up from a little creche a 10-cent Christ-child figurine. *What's this*, he asked his mother, who had him by the other hand. *C'mon, c'mon*, the mother answered. *You don't want that!* And she dragged him off – her mind, E. B. White imagined, “dark with gift thoughts.”

Friends, I tell you truly – someday a crisis **will** come. Calamity will break upon the shore of your life. Perhaps one is breaking even now. But, if you are grounded in the Wisdom God has spoken, you will have nothing to dread. You will not misstep. You will not panic. You will know whom to look to, to depend on, to trust and obey. You will know how to respond. And you may be able to help others who don't know... who are in trouble... who haven't heard Wisdom. **You** may be able to help **others**... just as Jesus did.

May you make that your aim!