

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many. I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble. Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.”

God speaks to you as a Father speaks to a son. He does this today in the Old Testament reading from Proverbs. God instructs you in the way you should go because he cares for you and would not have you perish. That’s underlying all this as he lays out these two paths before you so that you would be warned on the one hand and learn, on the other, what it means to live as one who has the righteousness of Christ and desires to live in it as God’s beloved child. You see your Christian life placed before you by God. He teaches you what is the godly way and what is the new life you have in Christ. This is the wisdom you have and are given even as you have Christ who is the Wisdom from on high.

Really this fork in the road set before you is not one in which you are left to your own devices, no that is what the fool does this is the way of the wicked. The fool follows his own way, his own truth, and lives his own life. He doesn’t listen to the instruction of the Lord. He is like a child who refuses to sit and hear the wisdom his father gives him and thinks he knows better than his father. He is like the prodigal son who would rather have his inheritance now and treat his father in a way which views him as good as dead. He then sets out on his path only to find its end longing to eat the food which pigs eat. Unlike the prodigal son, however, the way of the wicked continues to persist in sin rather than turn in repentance. As if that wasn’t enough he also, God teaches, “For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.” This is not the way of wisdom. This way is walked in darkness.

God wisely warns again in the Epistle reading, “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Walking along a path is concrete and it’s no different when you see that warning of what a life looks like when you are ruled, governed, and guided by the flesh which is to say when you live in your sin. You see this is real ways. Continue in those things and you will not inherit the kingdom of God. All the things listed in the Epistle reading are not some abstract notions of wrong that are left to your own interpretation. God’s law is clear as is the condemnation that goes along with sinning against him. Neither are there any loopholes where you can wiggle your way out of them. Going down the sinful, foolish, path is a downward into the darkness even as it really is a form of a living death. The wisdom of the Christian faith, however, is to listen to God’s warnings to you and know that what God’s says is true. Now examine your life according to what God says and be wise. See where you stand on account of his law and who you are in your sinful condition. God warns you and exhorts you to turn from those things lest you go to hell. Repent. “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.” Be wise and turn instead to the way of Wisdom.

There is one whose way was walked in total uprightness, Jesus. Your Lord walked the path of God’s law fully and completely. There was no sin or deceit in him. No, he walked the way of perfect righteousness as only he could do. He is the Light of the world, and the darkness did not nor can it overcome him. He scatters the darkness and lightens the path. In the famous hymn, “Savior of the Nations Come,” you sing and confess about Christ, “Then stepped forth the Lord of all, from his pure and kingly hall; God of God yet fully man, his heroic course began. God the Father was his source, back to God he ran his course. Into hell his road went down, back then to his throne and crown.” The path Jesus walked was for you benefit even as it went through death and hell and now, he is risen and ascended to the right hand of the Father.

Walking in the way of wisdom is done only in faith. It's only done by one whom has been enlightened by the Holy Spirit; turned from unbelief to faith. The wise one is one who listens to the one who is the Wisdom from on high himself. He follows and heeds the voice of the one who is the Way, the Truth, and Life. Apart from him there is no wisdom. Apart from Christ, one walks in the way of the foolish, the way of the wicked.

The way of wisdom is walked only in faith. You see, though, God's word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. Christ who is the Light of world lights your lamp and lightens the darkness of your heart in a new heart and a right spirit. "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day." You walk this path daily as a baptized child of God. To daily drown your old sinful man, mean to be wise and look for those things which sin against God and avoid them. If you are walking along the road and there is a snake ready to pounce you mark and avoid it, not step on it. "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on." God teaches you that. Likewise, you don't take your eyes off where you are heading. You look around and see what is coming along the way. You see where you are instructed to go so that you don't wander and get lost. God says, "Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life."

The way of wisdom is walked only in faith and is walking by the Spirit. Through faith you have the righteousness of Christ. His whole life of perfect obedience is yours. His atoning death in your place and satisfying God's wrath is given to you. This is the faith you have which looks to him, clings to him, and trusts in him. These are the benefits you have. This is the salvation and Lord you have. This is the new life in the Spirit which has been given to you. Now you do walk but you walk as one who is forgiven and has been clothed with Christ. You walk along the way as one who is wise to salvation. The path of wisdom is walked in Christ, and it is walked by you and it bears fruit. So, what does this look like? "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Listen to what God teaches in those things you have been given in the spirit and how you are called to walk. Desire those things. Practice them in your lives. Be diligent in what God is teaching you in these truly godly virtues that are to be how you walk in this life living in faith toward God in love toward your neighbor. These are real tangible things God grants you and cultivates in you as you remain in him, through the means of grace, and bear fruit. You grow in this sanctified life each and every day by the Holy Spirit. It's not complete and full, which your justification is, but you do have a real progress as you repent of your sin and live in the new life God has given to you and calls you to live.

In Psalm 119:9–16, God teaches you, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word." Learn from those words of God and let that description be the description of your life.

Dear saints of God, fix your eyes on Jesus and know your life is different. You have been healed and you, like Samaritan leper, know from whom this healing comes from and to whom you thank, praise, serve, and obey. He was thankful yes, but he gave thanks to the one who healed him. He was wise. You are wise in these things even as you are now wise walking through this life with eyes fixed toward eternity. Crucifying sin and living in the new life you have, the light shines brighter and brighter as God's word shines forth and it's on your hearts, lips, and life.

The Collect of the Day sums this all up beautifully as you consider this all. A few minutes ago, you prayed, "O Lord, keep Your Church with Your perpetual mercy; and because of our frailty we cannot but fall, keep us ever by Your help from all things hurtful and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation."

14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity—September 1, 2024

Keep coming back to Christ. He is your shield and redemption who has rescued you. By his wounds you are healed and have eternal life. Open your lips and declare his praise. Give him thanks for you are his own. Rejoice and walk confidently in the way of wisdom, upright in the way of righteousness for Christ is your righteousness. Give thanks in all things for your Lord says to you this very day this wisdom of salvation that is yours on account of him and what you have freely and fully by his grace, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.