

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

“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.”

One thing about the Christian faith and Christian life is there’s no neutrality. Each one of you and every single person in this world is not neutral but walking on a path. The Old Testament uses this word, “walk,” a great deal when it talks about one’s relationship toward God on the one hand and the way one lives apart from God on the other. Walking is living just as it is going someplace however and wherever that may be.

The reading from Proverbs today speaks volumes, then, as Solomon addresses his son and through these words of wisdom God is addressing you. Listen again to those opening verses, “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 has instructed you in the way of wisdom and set you free. This is your Christian life which comes from your life in Christ. Walking by faith is walking in the instruction of God, walking in the way of wisdom. Walking in the paths of righteousness is walking by faith and walking by faith is walking according to the word of God which is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. It’s hearing the Scriptures and conforming your life to it and not simply letting it go in one ear and out the other. You hear God’s word and keep it. Solomon tells his son this and reminds him as God reminds you, “listen dear child. Know who you are and who you have called to be. Live as I have given you life.”

The promises attached to this walk of life are listed in the verses, “When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.” The Gospel sets you free, that Christ has taken your sin upon himself and washed your sin away in the waters of Holy Baptism means absolutely everything for you. St. Paul brings this up in the Epistle reading as well when he writes, “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” You no longer stand condemned under God’s law rather you have been crucified with Christ, you no longer live but Christ lives in you and for freedom Christ has set you free. This is how you walk as one who is in Christ, you walk in freedom, you walk by faith. The path of the Christian is the path of freedom.

So, you must know the instruction of God, there’s nothing more important or pressing in this life. Everything else in this world is secondary. You must know the way of righteousness and with this you are taught what is the way of wickedness so that you would avoid it. Because the way of wickedness leads to death. There is no neutrality in all of this, there is either eternal life or eternal condemnation and suffering. These words of Solomon are so vitally important for you to heed and take to heart. Listen to them for they are the instruction of God and warns you against the way of wickedness.

We easily could apply to these words to our kids today as they go off to college, the workforce, high school, middle school, and even elementary school nowadays. This is true but lest we forget where God has placed us as parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and Christian friends. Someone needs to teach this instruction. It’s one thing to put the blame on others but our responsibility is to teach the things of God and confess them in our lives to our neighbors by our words and actions. If someone be they your child or friend never sees you going to church, praying, reading the Bible or talking about Christ and his word what should you expect for them to see about what it means to live a Christian life? It’s one thing when people go astray despite being taught and warned, that happens, but it’s still another when we like Adam in the Garden in Eden just stand idly by like a and watch it all happen.

In Deuteronomy 6 God teaches, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

We walk in danger all the way through this world. The devil is hard at work seeking for you to forget the instruction of God and walk off the path of righteousness and onto the very thing he warns against in this reading. “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. 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. But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.”

Everyone likes to hear about the fruit of the Spirit, and you should, it's the fruit of the Spirit after all. Your life is to be lived in those things listed as the fruit. Yet as quick as we are to buy a nice wall hanging, post a nice post on social media about peace, patience, and joy we are just as easily to forget what comes before those words and what God promises, yes promises if we continue in such things. “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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.”

Or maybe we don't even care which is deadly beyond all comparison. Maybe we concern ourselves more with things which will not bring about eternal death and are nicer to think and talk about? It's easy to forget the things of God, his instruction, and walk away from him when you concern yourselves and all your time with everything else. The more you start listening to what the world calls wisdom the sooner you will believe it. Being catechized is a lifelong thing and unavoidable. Either God is going to catechize you as walk in the way of life or the devil, the world, and your fallen flesh will, and they are more than eager and willing to do so. There's no shortage of teachers and teachings. Stop hearing God's word, stop studying his word, stop receiving his Supper, and start caring about other things more and well, God tells you where this will lead.

God knows your heart and says to you today, “My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”

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. 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. From the side of Jesus flow springs of living water. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You know, dear son, dear daughter, the life that Jesus gives is true refreshment and healing. He has walked the path of righteousness fully and he has walked the way of the cross which you rightly deserve. The promises of God for you are that he has called you his own and brought you into his Kingdom for he has purchased and won you from sin, death, and the power of the devil not with gold or silver but his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. That's no trite saying but a very real reality of who you are in Christ and what God has done for you. The great lengths he has gone through

seeking you out, buying you back, and calling you his own led down the paths of suffering and the way of the cross. Jesus walked the road you deserve to walk so that you instead walk in life.

You are Christians by the grace of God in Christ. 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. Walking by faith is a life of clinging to Christ in repentance and faith. It's a life where you have been healed and cleansed and keep coming back to the one who has made you clean just as the Samaritan leper did in the Gospel reading from Luke. It's a life that realizes on your own and going your own way will lead straight into hell but hearing the instruction of the Lord and clinging to the one who forgives you, Christ, you are covered with a righteousness given to you and walk along the way of one who is no longer slave to sin, death, and the devil and free to walk in life.

As you sit in the pews today and listen to these words of God, there is a call to awaken. To hear these words and go on our ways living as if God is lying when he warns us in these readings you are called to know better because these are the words of instruction to you. Apply this to your life whatever your vocation may be in the church, home, and the world around you. God is instructing you in the path you should go. Desire the things of God and the path he lays before you through his word.

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. In place of those things which bring about death there is the fruit of the Spirit which God produces in your life and serves your neighbor. "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." Notice all of things listed direct you to find your confidence and strength outside of yourself and in the one whose life is lived perfectly according to those things. It's a life of faith toward God and love toward your neighbor. It's a life that is not harmful to yourself or your neighbor around you but one in which you live in mercy and compassion toward others even as your Lord himself has shown you mercy and compassion.

In the Introit today from Psalm 84 you prayed, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness." You are in the house of your God right now and have been given a place greater than a doorkeeper; you are heir of everlasting life. Hear those words and rejoice that this belongs to you and what God promises is yours today and for all eternity. These readings today are harsh words, but they are true and need to be heard. God's purpose in all of this, though, is known. It's your redemption which has won for you in Christ.

Dear people of God. These things are so important. Hear the instruction of God and be attentive to his word. Do not walk in the ways and counsels of the wicked. Do not even try to dabble by it but avoid them. Instead walk in freedom, walk in life. Put your sorrows, your suffering, and your sin upon Jesus who has atoned for it and takes your burden away. He looks at you now and says, "I forgive you, be at peace and rest." You see that's the thing too about all of this as the Father is gracious and merciful toward you in all of this as he has called you his own child and treats you as Christ deserves to be treated. See Christ crucified who gives you refreshment. You go along the way, but Christ is the one who has gone before you and goes with you just as he has promised.

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

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yours on account of him and what you have freely and fully by his grace. He sets you free and clinging to him you keep returning to him who forgives, strengthens you and keeps you in himself. You walk by faith which the Holy Spirit has given you and all the while your Lord Jesus says, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well [saved you].”

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