

Sunday December 12, 2021

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

"Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. ² For great is his love towards us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures for ever. Praise the LORD."

Song – Come people of the risen King

[Stuart Townend 'Come People Of The Risen King' \(Official Lyric Video\) - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. Come, people of the Risen King
Who delight to bring Him praise
Come all and tune your hearts to sing
To the Morning Star of grace
From the shifting shadows of the earth
We will lift our eyes to Him
Where steady arms of mercy reach
To gather children in</p> | <p>3. Come, young and old from every land
Men and women of the faith
Come, those with full or empty hands
Find the riches of His grace
Over all the world, His people sing
Shore to shore we hear them call
The Truth that cries through every age:
"Our God is all in all!"</p> |
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*Rejoice, rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!
One heart, one voice; O Church of Christ, rejoice!*

2. Come, those whose joy is morning sun
And those weeping through the night
Come, those who tell of battles won
And those struggling in the fight
For His perfect love will never change
And His mercies never cease
But follow us through all our days
With the certain hope of peace

Bible Reading – Proverbs 3 (NIV)

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, ² for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. ³ Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart ⁴ Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man.

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.

⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. ⁹ Honour the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. ¹³ Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, ¹⁴ for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. ¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour. ¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed.

¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; ²⁰ by his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew. ²¹ My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion; ²² they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. ²³ Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble. ²⁴ When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. ²⁵ Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, ²⁶ for the LORD will be at your side and will keep your foot from being snared. ²⁷ Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. ²⁸ Do not say to your neighbour, "Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you"— when you already have it with you. ²⁹ Do not plot harm against your neighbour who lives trustfully near you. ³⁰ Do not accuse anyone for no reason— when they have done you no harm. ³¹ Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways. ³² For the LORD detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence. ³³ The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. ³⁴ He mocks proud mockers but shows favour to the humble and oppressed. ³⁵ The wise inherit honour, but fools get only shame.

Announcements – Sunday 12th December

Kids Church Prize giving will be happening today at our 10:30am service. Many thanks to all those who have taught and modelled the Christian faith to our youngsters this year and a special thanks to Suzie and Charlotte who have done so much to make it such a successful year.

Taylors Away. Stephen and Kaylene are away at Yarrawonga this weekend where Stephen has the privilege of officiating at his nieces Nikki's wedding. He will be back on deck tomorrow.

School Holidays. Public school children go on holidays later this week so that means the normal activities of the church will close down for the Summer School Holidays and will only start back after Australia Day 2022. There will be a basic Kids Church that will run each Sunday over that time. Over the summer we do hope that you are able to have a break from all your Church activities. Please come each Sunday but during the week we hope you take a well earned break from everything else. Many thanks to those who have given of themselves this year to make the ministries of the church run so well.

Holiday kids church is on during the summer school holidays for all kids up to year 6: school kids go to the church hall and under 5s go to the cottage after starting in church.

Pledges. Many thanks to all those who have pledged money for our Ministry Facilities Fund. When you come to pay your pledges please can you mark the transfer or the envelope 'Building'

SRE Teaching. Have you ever considered teaching Scripture to local kids in our public schools? There are vacancies each Thursday @ 12:30pm at Charlestown public as well as opportunities in other local primary schools. Training would be required but there is currently a grant that would pay for it available. If you would like more information, please see Karen Logan or Stephen

Focus for the month – Christmas. From an article [7 Tips for Celebrating Christmas as a Family | Crossway Articles](#) 1. Tie everything back to Jesus (lights, tree, gifts, cards etc). 2. Start now and use the advent period. 3. With your gifts make it memorable rather than expensive. 4. Confront consumerism – its not about presents! 5. Remember the forgotten people. 6. Bury your hatchets with people that you have had conflict with in the past. 7. Read, share, sing, pray!

ZOOM Prayer time. Every Monday night the Church meets via ZOOM to pray. It is so important that pray, both individually and collectively for each other, our church and our nation at this time.

Christmas Services will be held at

Christmas Eve 6pm (Charlestown),

Christmas Day 8am (Swansea) and 9:30am Charlestown).

Please use the opportunity to invite friends and family to come along.

Church Directory. For those who prefer a paper Church directory, there are a limited number of the names and addresses of our people at the entrance to the Church. For the rest of us, the easiest way of getting people's details is on Elevanto, our Church Management System. For more information about how to use Elevanto please speak to Liz Hyslop or one of the elders.

Song – Jesus is the King

[Jesus Is The King -- Emu Kids.mp4 - Google Drive](#)

Chorus

Jesus is the King, ruler over everything
 Jesus is the one, promised one the Son of God
 Jesus is the Lord, he's the one you can't ignore
 Jesus, Jesus, he is the King
 He is the King

3. He commanded the wind and waves
 Hey be still, be still
 And they did and they did
 And they did because

1. He commanded the fisherman
 Hey come follow me
 And they did and they did
 And they did because

4. He promised that three days after death
 He'd rise again
 And he did and he did
 And He did because

2. He commanded the evil ones
 Hey come out of him
 And they did and they did
 And they did because

Pastoral Prayer Points

Psalm 128: "You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you." (v. 2). This psalm uses the language of 'fruitfulness.' In Biblical imagery "fruit" means godliness; lives that mirror the qualities of God's own character. Pray that our church would be a place of justice, kindness and love. And that each of us would grow in godliness and become more like our Head, Jesus Christ.

Pray for Chile - Pray for the culture of division within the Chilean church to be overcome by the unity of the Holy Spirit. Pray for those scarred by Pinochet's reign to humbly forgive their abusers. Pray for zeal within the Church to evangelise the Mapuche people in the South.

Pray for the Parsons in Japan: Continue to pray for Steve and Sandra Parsons in Japan. Pray that God would continue to sustain them. Pray for the gospel to go out and the hearts of Japanese people to be responsive.

Pray for gospel opportunities over Christmas: Pray for opportunities over the Christmas period to share the good news of Jesus with family and friends. Pray for conversions among those who don't usually come to church except around this time of year.

Bible Reading – Matthew 22:34-40 (NIV)

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'^[c] ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'^[d] ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Sermon: Wisdom is the How to love God and neighbour (David W)

When I was about 18 I met up with a bunch of friends in the Sydney CBD to have dinner. After dinner somebody suggested we should all go and see a movie. I wanted to see one movie but I got outvoted by the group and so we end up going to see the movie The Lost Boys.

Not being very gracious about not getting the movie I wanted to see, I sat watching the film having a bit of a sulk to myself. This film is completely stupid I thought. It had vampires with teenagers and a grandfather trying to hunt them and I felt the ending was utterly ridiculous. Once the film was over my friend asked me what did I think. Still in a petulant mood I didn't sugar coat my reply and I told him exactly what I thought. My friend patiently listened to my spray and at the end he said to me "do you realise the film is an extended metaphor about drug addiction." In a moment the film now made sense. All the scenes that I had thought were so stupid now seemed very clever and it was almost as if I was enjoying the film retrospectively. The film now made sense because I'd been given the correct way of looking at it, of seeing it as it really was. I now knew what the film was all about.

A lot of things make a lot more sense when you know what they are all about. If you are doing a jigsaw puzzle it's useful to have the same picture on the box as the puzzle will actually make up. When you are watching a movie it's handy to know whether what you are watching is fiction or if it's a documentary. Imagine how confused you would be if you thought Star Trek was a documentary? And most people unless they are utterly superficial, and shallow will usually have given some thought to what life actually all about. In my last sermon on Proverbs chapter 3 we considered how Proverbs 3 challenges a belief or point of view or a way of thinking of what life is all about that is so deeply held that it is almost beyond challenge. This is the belief that I am the person who knows what is best for me. But Proverbs chapter 3 and indeed the whole book of Proverbs shows us that it is God who knows what is best for us and that we should not be wise in our own eyes but trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding. The correct way of looking at life, the way to see life as it was meant to be is through trusting in God. And when we had a look at the first 12 verses of Proverbs 3 I made the points that trust in God trust needs to permeate through all areas of our lives – our hearts, our minds, our possessions, and our attitudes to suffering.

Loving God and neighbour

But this morning I want to take a step back and look at the whole of Proverbs chapter 3 and do a bit more than say what life is **not** all about but rather consider what Proverbs says life **is** all about. Everyone wants to lead the good life but what is the secret to living the good life? What is the key to living the good life that actually works? There are three sections to Proverbs 3. Each section starts with the phrase my son.

Verse 1 *My son do forget my teaching but keep my commands in your heart*

Verse 11 *My son do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke*

Verse 21 *My son preserve sound judgement and discernment, do not let them out of your sight*

Before I look more closely at each section I want to point out the overall framework and that is the secret to the good life or shalom is in being rightly related to God section 1, being rightly related to our neighbour section 3 and then section 2 is a hymn of praise to wisdom.

There is a symmetry between sections 1 and 3. In section 1 there are 5 commands and in section 3 there are 5 prohibitions. Broadly speaking the 5 commands in section one concern how we relate to God and the 5 prohibitions in section 3 concern how we relate to our neighbour. The commentary I read makes the point that this is not a coincidence. To love God is to love your neighbour. There are also links that can be made with the commands in section 1 and the prohibitions in section 3. For example, fear of the Lord in verse 7 leads us to turn away from doing evil to others verses 29 and 30. Honouring the Lord with our wealth verse 9 certainly involves fair treatment of neighbours and care for the poor verses 27 and 28. Finally, the straight path in verse 6 resulting from trusting in the Lord is echoed in verses 31-33 as safety from the ruin of the wicked. When asked what is the greatest commandment Jesus replied

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it Love your neighbour as yourself.

The apostle John writes in his first letter *whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen.*

Wisdom is the How to love God and neighbour

So what is life all about? What is the secret to living the good life? Life is all about loving God and loving your neighbour. That is the **what** question and this an important question to answer correctly. But what I want look at more closely this morning is the **how** question, that is how do I love God and my neighbour? The answer to this question is tied up in the concept of wisdom.

In touch with created reality

A good working definition of wisdom is that wisdom is the ability to be in touch with created reality or in other words to see things as they really are. Why is it always a good idea to listen to the advice of older people about something that is being discussed? Because they have been around, they have experience, they have seen what works and what doesn't work and they are able to see things as they really are. In my field of audiology young bright engineers are always coming up with new ideas for hearing aids and cochlear implants that enthusiastically presented at product launches and conferences. But the older audiologists can often take one look at a new product and go "well that won't work"! Why do they know this? Well they have been working with people with hearing aids for a long time. They have observed that a product with multiple buttons and functions as well as complicated interactions with Bluetooth accessories will not be understood by most people. They see things as they really are and not how an engineer thinks they should be.

So wisdom in relating to God is tied up with seeing him as he really is. God is both powerful and loving and he wants what is best for us. The more we meditate on God as he reveals himself in his word the bible we realize that the only fitting response is to hand our lives to him. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.

Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and shun evil.

Sometimes you might hear people say I like to think of God as being a life force moving within us all, as a positive energy that connects all things, as a sparkly pink unicorn with rainbow eyes. When I hear people talk like that I have often been tempted to say (although thankfully wise enough not to actually say) something like you know what, I like to think of you as a purple 3 toed sloth. If someone said that to us we would rightly say but I'm not a purple 3 toed sloth. I'm a human being and while you might like to think of me as a purple 3 toed sloth it's not who I am. It's not true. It's not in touch with reality. But what if God is a person rather than an impersonal force? And what if God being a person likes some things and dislikes other things. And what if God actually reveals who he is and what he is like through written language that can be clearly understood?

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. Do not be wise in your own eyes fear the Lord and shun evil.

Surely the idea that my thoughts somehow shape reality and that I decide what God himself is like is the ultimate example of leaning on my own understanding and being wise in my own eyes?

Seeing God as he really is

So if wisdom is about being in touch with created reality then seeing God as he really is and not how we would like him to be is the starting point for wisdom. Proverbs 9:10 says

the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy one is understanding. Modern Christians have often been somewhat uncomfortable about the idea of the fear of the Lord. "Ah yes" they will say "what the word fear really means is reverent awe". But English already has words for the concept

of reverent awe and they are reverent and awe. But the word the translators used is fear and I think we need to be careful about downplaying the word fear. We tend to want a God who is our friend, our buddy and not our Lord. We want a gentle Jesus meek and mild. We want to focus on Jesus as the lamb of God and not as the lion of Judah.

One of my favourite quotes from CS Lewis's *The Lion The Witch and the Wardrobe* is when the children are told that Aslan is a lion. "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion. That you will dearie and no mistake said Mrs Beaver if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking they're either braver than most or silly. Then he isn't safe said Lucy. Safe?" said Mr Beaver. Don't you hear what Mrs Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

If I could go back to my working definition of wisdom which was that wisdom is about being in touch with **created** reality. The knowledge that God is the creator and that everything we see including us is created is crucial to being rightly related to God and to our neighbour. The links between wisdom and creation can be seen in verses 19 and 20.

By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place. By his knowledge the watery depths were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.

If we are just a collection of molecules brought together by blind chance and random mutations, then we can live however we choose. But that also robs us of any significance and meaning. And why should I care whether you another collection of molecules lives or dies. But if God is our creator, then that gives life purpose and dignity. If God is our creator, then he has the right to say what his creation is for, what it's all about. If I decide to use a Rolex watch to hammer in nails, then that is to violate its creators intent. If I were to take that watch back to the manufacturer and complain how it seems a remarkably poor tool to use in my garage renovation project, then they would probably want to point out that that is not what a Rolex watch is for. So God is our creator and as such he has the right to define the conditions that lead to human flourishing. We are the created and therefore as the creature rather than the creator our existence is dependent on the creator.

Wisdom as a gift and task

This leads me to the next point I want to draw out from Proverbs 3 about the nature of wisdom. I mentioned earlier that wisdom involves recognition of the reality that we are created beings and are therefore dependent on our creator for everything. This dependence expresses itself initially by simple obedience. You can see this in verse 1 where it says

my son do not forget my teaching but keep my commands in your heart.

The second section also starts by naming the Lord as the source of discipline and correction. But the third section begins with an exhortation to preserve sound judgement and discernment. This is the first of the addresses that does not refer to teaching external to the son whether from the parents in section 1 or from the Lord in section 2. Why is this significant? Put simply God wants us to grow up. To be thinking, reasoning beings who have internalized God's teachings and commands to create a world view that enables us to navigate our way through all the various decisions in life whether big or small. Christian writer Tim Keller gives a helpful example. When your child is 8 years old and they ask can I go outside and play then the parent will give more specific commands like yes you can but be back by dinner time or no you can't until you've tidied your room. If your 25-year-old child who has moved out of home to rings you up and asks can I go out and play then you would seriously worried. "Haven't I given you a framework to make decisions like this? You know what's in your diary. You know whether you have more important obligations to meet". You see it may seem very pious to say that we look for the Lord's leading from a feeling of peace or a sign or a dream in which we get direct instructions from the Lord in every decision we make. But that is to abdicate our responsibility to strive towards developing a coherent Christian world

view based on the careful study and application of God's word. In Graham Goldsworthy's very helpful book *Gospel and Wisdom* he describes wisdom as being both a gift and a task. A gift in the sense that God has graciously revealed himself and also enabled us to see him as he really is. A task in that once we have seen who God really is, we then have the task to grow in knowledge based on the study of his word and applying it to our life experiences. Have a look at verses 13 and 14 where there is the idea of finding, gaining and desiring wisdom.

Wisdom is more desirable than anything

My final point about wisdom is that it is more desirable than anything. When we read Proverbs chapter 3 we need to be careful not to think of God as a divine vending machine – do this and you will have prosperity, do that and you will have long life, do something else and then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine.

If we are only following God because we think this is the best way to ensure that we remain healthy and wealthy, then we are loving something else more than God. But that is to serve God on our own terms and not on his terms. If loving God, if desiring wisdom is dependent on God keeping up a stream of desirable goodies, then we are not loving God, we are using him. Our gratitude is not true thankfulness but more like the cynical gratitude defined by Sir Humphrey Appleby in *Yes Prime Minister* where gratitude is merely the lively expectation of favours to come. But what about when God disciplines and rebukes us verse 11? What about when the path of loving God and loving our neighbour takes us in directions that we would prefer not to go? What if loving God and our neighbour means being less wealthy? What if God allows us to be sick, unhappy or go through hard times in general? Do we choose wisdom, or do we choose silver gold and rubies? But

wisdom is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies. Nothing you desire can compare with her.

It's only a short step to go from the statement wisdom is more desirable than anything to say that Jesus is more desirable than anything. In 1 Corinthians 1:30 Christ Jesus is described as becoming for us wisdom from God and in Colossians 2:3 Jesus is the one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Jesus was not just an example of someone who was perfectly related to both God and his neighbour and therefore the ultimate wise man, he was also the means by which we could be rightly related to God and our neighbour. By dying on the cross and taking the punishment that we deserved he removed the greatest barrier to our having a right relationship with God – our sin. And when we recognize that we have been restored to a right relationship with God not through our own goodness but through the death and resurrection of Jesus then this will flow on to right relationships with our neighbours. We will be humble and not proud in our dealings with others because we realize that it by grace we have been saved. We will be patient and forgiving with others because we know that God has been patient and forgiving with us through Jesus. And above all we will want to share the good news about Jesus with all who don't know him because we know that he is the only way for us and them to be reconciled to God and is the only hope for our world of broken relationships.

The film *the Lost Boys* made so much more sense when I knew what it was all about but life itself makes more sense when I know it is all about Jesus. CS Lewis wrote.

I believe in Christ like I believe in the sun. not because I can see it but because by it I can see everything else.

Lets pray. Lord God help us to trust in Jesus with all our hearts and to lean not on our own understanding. Help us not to be wise in our own eyes but to fear Jesus and shun evil and help us to desire Jesus more than anything else and we pray these things in His Name. Amen.

Song – Consider Christ

[Consider Christ \(Acoustic Lyric Video\) -- Emu Music.mp4 - Google Drive](#)

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| <p>1. Consider Christ, the source of our salvation
That he should take the penalty for me
Though he was pure, a lamb without a blemish;
He took my sins and nailed them to the tree</p> <p>Chorus: My Lord and God
You are so rich in mercy
Mere words alone are not sufficient thanks.
So take my life, transform, renew and change me
That I might be a living sacrifice</p> | <p>2. Consider Christ, that he could trust his Father
In the garden of Gethsemane
Though full of dread and fearful of the anguish;
He drank the cup that was reserved for me.</p> <p>3. Consider Christ, for death he has defeated.
And he arose, appeared for all to see.
And now he sits at God's right hand in heaven
Where he prepares a resting place for me.</p> |
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Closing.

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.*

⁸ *This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones*

Morning Tea Why not give someone a call and have a cuppa together?