

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost August 4, 2024  
**THE WAY OF THE WISE SON**  
*Proverbs 4:10-23*

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus who is the wisdom of God,

Remember back 3 Sundays ago when our Sermon theme was "The Search for Wisdom." Today we are going to continue that theme in Proverbs by looking at how we can guide our children into wisdom.

One goal of most parents and grandparents is to guide their children into wisdom. We don't want our children to make foolish decisions by which they may end up hurting themselves or someone else. As adults, we've also made many mistakes in our lives and seen the painful mistakes others have made, and we want to share that wisdom with our children, so they don't go down that same path. We teach our children about how to manage their money wisely, the wisdom of dating someone who shares their same faith and confession, and how to take care of the things God has given us—like a house or a car. The hope and prayer of each parent is that their children will take these nuggets of wisdom to heart and avoid the heartache and pain that their parents have witnessed or experienced in their own lives.

As Solomon speaks to his son, he talks about the way of the wise son who listens to instruction and avoids the path of the wicked. As we read these verses, remember that this isn't just the wisdom of Solomon for his son. No, in Proverbs 2, Solomon tells us that **"the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."** (2:6) God the Father is also speaking heavenly wisdom to us, His sons and daughters by faith. Listen now to verse 10 through 23 of chapter 4 as God gives wisdom, knowledge and understanding to you:

<sup>10</sup> *Hear, my son, and accept my words,  
that the years of your life may be many.*

<sup>11</sup> *I have taught you the way of wisdom;  
I have led you in the paths of uprightness.*

<sup>12</sup> *When you walk, your step will not be hampered,  
and if you run, you will not stumble.*

<sup>13</sup> *Keep hold of instruction; do not let go;  
guard her, for she is your life.*

<sup>14</sup> *Do not enter the path of the wicked,  
and do not walk in the way of the evil.*

<sup>15</sup> *Avoid it; do not go on it;  
turn away from it and pass on.*

<sup>16</sup> *For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong;  
they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.*

<sup>17</sup> *For they eat the bread of wickedness  
and drink the wine of violence.*

<sup>18</sup> *But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,  
which shines brighter and brighter until full day.*

<sup>19</sup> *The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;  
they do not know over what they stumble.*

<sup>20</sup> *My son, be attentive to my words;  
incline your ear to my sayings.*  
<sup>21</sup> *Let them not escape from your sight;  
keep them within your heart.*  
<sup>22</sup> *For they are life to those who find them,  
and healing to all their flesh.*  
<sup>23</sup> *Keep your heart with all vigilance,  
for from it flow the springs of life. (ESV ©2001)*

This is the Word of God, breathed into Solomon by God the Holy Spirit. These words are life and healing. May the Holy Spirit guide our footsteps on the wise way that we may glorify Him. Even so we pray, **“O Lord, sanctify us by Your truth, Your word is truth.”** Amen.

Hebrew poetry, like that found here in Proverbs, frequently makes use of parallelism. One thought may be expressed in two different ways to help us understand more clearly what is being said. Other times you might find one thought being contrasted with an opposing thought to clarify it. We find that in our text with the grouping of several parallel thoughts. Take a look at our verses again.

First of all, in verses 10 through 13, Solomon reminds his son of the wise instruction he has received and the blessing of walking in God’s wisdom. He urges his son to hold onto that instruction and guard it, **“for she is your life.”** Walking the way of wisdom will keep him from getting tripped up in life.

Solomon then warns his son about the path of the wicked in verses 14 through 17. **“Avoid it,”** Solomon writes. Don’t even step foot on that path. In verse 16 he writes of how the wicked cannot sleep until they have done something wrong or make someone stumble. Those words might remind you of the enemies of Daniel who hated him and plotted to get rid of him by outlawing anyone in the kingdom from praying to anyone but King Darius for a month. Or think of the Scribes and Pharisees who wouldn’t rest until Jesus was condemned to death. Or the 40 Jews who vowed not to eat or drink anything until they had killed the Apostle Paul.

Next, look at verses 18 and 19. Here Solomon contrasts the brightness of the path of the righteous with the darkness of the way of the wicked. The righteous who walk in the way of God’s wisdom see things more and more clearly, giving light to others, and have nothing to trip them up or be ashamed of. He then contrasts that with the dark ways of the wicked who don’t even realize what they are stumbling over.

Finally in verses 20 through 23, Solomon again urges his son to pay close attention to the God-given wisdom Solomon is sharing with him. Solomon wants his son to guard these words and guard his heart so that he is not enticed to go in the dark ways of the wicked.

As you hear Solomon write about how he has instructed his son in the way of wisdom, think back to how long the LORD has been instructing you. Maybe, like Timothy, it has been since you were a child. **“From infancy you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”** (2 Timothy 3:15) Your parents brought you to church as a little baby to hear God’s Word and worship him. You heard the Word of God at home as your family had devotions around the dinner table or at bedtime. Mom or Dad made sure you went to Catechism Class to learn more about the wisdom of God revealed in His Word.

Though we have been instructed in the wisdom of God, have we heeded it? Have we walked the way of the wise son and avoided the path of the wicked?

As I look at my life and the last week for me, I see that I have failed to avoid the dark path of the wicked. What about you? Was it wise for us to go out to the bar with our friends, knowing they were not going

there for one beer but wanted to get drunk. Were we acting as wise sons by ignoring the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment and going to that coffee group because we knew we'd get all the juicy gossip of the day and hear about all the bad things that other people had been doing? Were we wise to ignore Jesus warnings about the lust of the eyes and watch that rated-R movie or internet site even after we saw it contain explicit sexual content.

Sadly, if we examine our ways we will see that our walk of life has strayed onto the dark path of sin. We have not always obeyed the wise commands of our heavenly Father. Sometimes we ignore or forget the Christian instruction of our parents, teachers, and pastors, thinking we knew better than they did. We have dipped our toes into the water of the world by joining in wicked or ungodly behavior. As we confessed this morning, we have done many things which would disappoint our heavenly Father.

So let us turn our attention to One wiser than King Solomon— that is Jesus Christ. Jesus says of the Bible, ***“these are they which testify of Me.”*** (John 5:39) Based on these words we should be looking for Jesus throughout the Old Testament—including these verses of Proverbs 4. Take a look again at our verses and see if you can find Jesus in them.

- In verse 11 we know that Jesus knew the way of wisdom and the paths of uprightness.
- In verse 13, think of how Jesus held onto the instruction of God's Word and guarded it all the days of His life. When He was 12-years-old in the Temple, He amazed the church teachers with His questions and told Mary and Joseph that He ***“must be about My Father's business.”*** (Luke 2:49)
- Read verses 14 and 15, and think of Jesus in the wilderness, being tempted by the Devil. Jesus avoided the way of the wicked telling Satan to get away from Him.
- In verse 18 think of Jesus who is the Light of the World who shines brighter and brighter the more we get to know Him by faith through His Word.

*Jesus is the wise Son who listened to and followed the way of wisdom all the days of His life.* Even when the cross was before Him, Jesus prayed to His Father, ***“Not my will, but Thy will be done.”*** He followed the instruction of His Father unto death, even the death of the cross. Jesus endured the pain of the cross because it was His Father's wise way of taking away the sin of the world. Far from being a disappointment to His Father, the Father said twice about Jesus, ***“This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”*** The Father was so pleased with the life and sacrificial death of His Son, that He raised Him from the dead on Easter. Jesus showed Himself to be the wise Son all the days of His life.

Dear fellow children of the heavenly Father, through faith in Christ, God has credited you with the ways of His wise Son. Baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ. Rather than seeing your wicked ways, the un-wise choices you have made, and all those disappointing things you have done, through faith in Christ, God sees His Son. He credits you with all the wise choices His Son made. And because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, God washes away the sin of all those foolish and wicked steps we have taken.

Take these words to heart. Guard them, as Solomon writes in verse 22, ***“for they are life to those who find them and healing to all their flesh.”*** Forgiven and credited with the righteousness of God's wise Son, let us now walk wisely. Avoid the dark paths of the wicked from which you have been redeemed. Be attentive to God's words and incline our ears to His sayings. Read your Bibles at home. Attend Bible Class and Sunday School. Pursue Christian Education with your children and grandchildren so that they may be instructed in the wisdom of God. Don't let His Word escape from your sight. Keep them within your heart. And as His Spirit works through His word, increasing your faith, your ways will be like the rising sun in the morning that grows brighter and brighter until it reaches full day eternally in heaven. May God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer**