

Sermon Note: Choosing How We Should Live

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

This week, we're exploring the wisdom of Proverbs, specifically looking at how these ancient sayings guide us in making choices. Proverbs offers practical wisdom for everyday living, reminding us that our decisions reflect our values and shape our lives. Think of it like being on a road trip (remember our Advent worship series?) with a trusty compass; we might always not have a turn-by-turn GPS, but we have a sense of direction that helps us navigate life's complexities.

The passage from Proverbs 22 encourages us to live wisely, not by having all the right answers but by aligning our choices with the kind of life God calls us to lead—a life marked by integrity, generosity, and justice. These proverbs challenge us to look beyond the immediate and the self-serving and consider what it means to live in a way that honors God and serves others. As we prepare for Sunday's worship, let's consider how we can apply this wisdom to our daily lives.

Illustration Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEBCT-Lsh-A>

In the closing scene from the 2008 film "The Dark Knight," Batman decides to take the fall for Harvey Dent's crimes. In doing so, Batman chooses to let Gotham believe he is the villain so that Dent's reputation as the city's "White Knight" remains untarnished. He makes this decision to preserve hope and order in the city.

Why This Video?

This scene illustrates the theme of making difficult, selfless choices for the greater good, aligning with the wisdom found in Proverbs about integrity and justice. Batman's decision to take the blame, knowing it will lead to personal sacrifice and suffering, reflects the kind of wisdom that values long-term good over immediate gratification or personal gain. It challenges us to think about how we make choices that reflect our values, even when those choices are misunderstood or difficult.

Video Discussion Questions

1. In the video clip, Batman makes a choice that involves personal sacrifice for the greater good. Do you think his decisions reflect wisdom and/or integrity? Why or why not?
2. Think about some choices you've made recently. How do your decisions show what you truly value?
3. How can the wisdom found in Proverbs help us navigate tough situations in our own lives?

Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23 (CEB)

¹A good reputation is better than much wealth;
high esteem is better than silver and gold.

²The rich and the poor have this in common:
the Lord made them both.

⁸Those who sow injustice will harvest evil;
the rod of their fury will come to an end.

⁹Happy are generous people,
because they give some of their food to the poor.

²²Don't steal from the poor, because they are poor.
Don't oppress the needy in the gate.

²³The Lord will take up their case
and press the life out of those who oppress them.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. Think about other scriptures that tell us how to live, such as the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes. How do these compare to the teachings in Proverbs? Are these teachings negotiable, or do they set a firm foundation for wise living?
2. Proverbs often uses couplets, with two phrases supporting or opposing each other. For example, Proverbs 22:1-2 talks about the value of a good name over riches. What do these couplets teach us about wisdom and the choices we make?
3. While Proverbs often presents a black-and-white view of wisdom versus foolishness, how do these sayings apply in a world filled with gray areas? How do we use this wisdom to make choices today?
4. Proverbs describe different types of people—wise, foolish, and simple. Reflect on your life experiences. When have you acted wisely, foolishly, or simply? Who were the mentors or wise ones that guided you?
5. [Read James 2:1-17](#) and compare it to today's scripture from Proverbs. How does James' message about equity and justice align with the wisdom of Proverbs?
6. James 2:13 talks about the "law of liberty," where mercy triumphs over judgment. How can you apply this principle in your daily decisions, especially in challenging situations?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. Do you usually make choices with your head or your heart? Why?
2. Think of someone you know who makes poor decisions. What do you think leads them to those choices? (Remember, this is about the behavior/choices, not the person.)
3. Share a time you regretted a decision. What did you do about that regret?
4. What makes some choices good and others bad?
5. Do you think the decision-making process is as important as the decision itself? Why or why not?
6. How would you apply the insights from today's scripture to the decisions we discussed?

Weekly Action

This week, reflect on a decision you recently made or need to make soon. Consider how the text from Proverbs guides you to choose wisely, with integrity and justice in mind. Write down your thoughts and share them with a trusted friend or mentor and ask for their perspective. This practice can help you align your choices more closely with the wisdom of God.

Prayer

Gracious God of Abundance, we thank you for the guidance we have from you and our wise ones in how to live justly and graciously. We pray that we may be good stewards of what we have from you and share those blessings with others; in Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.