

Sermon for October 12th, 2025
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

Proverbs 25:6-14

- 6** Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence
or stand in the place of the great,
7 for it is better to be told, "Come up here,"
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.
What your eyes have seen
8 do not hastily bring into court,
for what will you do in the end,
when your neighbor puts you to shame?
9 Argue your case with your neighbor himself,
and do not reveal another's secret,
10 lest he who hears you bring shame upon you,
and your ill repute have no end.
11 A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.
12 Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold
is a wise reprover to a listening ear.
13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest
is a faithful messenger to those who send him;
he refreshes the soul of his masters.
14 Like clouds and wind without rain
is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.

Psalm 2

- 1** Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Ephesians 4:1-6

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Luke 14:1-11

1 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. **2** And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. **3** And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” **4** But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. **5** And he said to them, “Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” **6** And they could not reply to these things.

7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, **8** “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, **9** and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. **10** But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. **11** For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Our text for meditation this Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Old Testament reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Our Old Testament reading comes from the book of Proverbs, and at first blush it seems like a disjointed pile of advice. What's going on here? What's the point of this sort of passage? To put it simply, king Solomon wrote the Proverbs as a means of imparting wisdom to all who would read and put his exhortations into practice. What is wisdom? It is the skill for living well, and behaving in such a way that things go well for you. We all want to live the good life, right? We want to be well-off financially, healthy, suffering as little as possible, and having as little conflict as possible. We all want to live with few problems and many blessings. But in order to have that, we must have wisdom. Living the good life means making good choices, speaking good words, building up good habits, thinking good thoughts – are you noticing a pattern here?

Good is the operative word here. Not only good in the sense of shrewdness or cleverness, but good in the *moral* sense as well. Solomon ties wisdom to keeping God's Commandments from a heart that is devoted to His ways. For this reason, he writes to us that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy one is insight.”¹ To fear God and follow in His ways is the first step in health, wealth and happiness, to live the good life one must first seek to be a good and Godly person. Now, lest I be accused of advocating for a “theology of glory,” wisdom is found in doing the right thing even if we are having a hard time in life, even if it does not seem to pay off, even if we are persecuted. But generally speaking, this obedience *does* have visible rewards now and in the future.

So what does this all have to do with our reading? Much in every way. You see my friends, whenever Solomon writes a proverb, he writes with the intention that we would connect it with the Commandments of our Lord in mind, especially the Second Greatest Commandment. God commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves.² How do we love our neighbors? By caring about them the same way we care about our own well-being. But in order to do that, we must love ourselves. How do we do that? Ah, there is a secret of wisdom that I am happy to reveal to you: in order to love yourself, you must show love to your neighbor by obedience to God's commands.

The Eighth Commandment and Wisdom

Our Old Testament reading is a fantastic example of this dynamic. Following Solomon's admonitions will not only be pleasing to God, it will also teach us wisdom regarding the Eighth Commandment and help us live better lives. The Eighth Commandment is *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*. And what does this mean? Dr Luther says in the Small Catechism,

*We should fear and love God, and so we should not tell lies about our neighbor, nor betray, slander, or defame him, but should apologize for him, speak well of him, and interpret charitably all that he does.*³

When Solomon writes that we must not run off to court quickly, he has the Eighth Commandment in mind. His hypothetical scenario is that we have seen what *looks* like some misbehavior that our neighbor has done. If we sinfully desire to ruin our neighbor's reputation, we will hurry to drag him to court or “cancel” him on social media. But what will that win us? Solomon says it will lead to our own ruin. We shall not get away with it; either in the court or in public air, our neighbor will be vindicated against our slander. If that does not happen, then we should fear all the more, because it may be that our neighbor cries out to God over all this, and God Himself will see to it that we are punished for our slander. So you see my friends, not only are there *consequences* for failing to heed this warning, it is also beneficial to our own lives that we follow Solomon's commentary here. If I do not run off to the judge trying to ruin my neighbor, then my reputation is protected.

This is also true in the beginning of the passage. Solomon adjures us to take a lower place before a king. This too is in obedience to the Eighth Commandment! If you intentionally choose a place of lower honor before someone in authority, then you are speaking well of all those men who must have more honor as they take their places. You are, as Luther puts it, interpreting their reputation and deeds charitably with my humility. This humility and obedience brings about many blessings for those who do it. If they are in the proper place, then they are protected from embarrassment; but if they are sitting in too low of a position, then they are given honor by God and the one in authority!

If you are honest and tactful, then Solomon praises that as well, saying that your fitly spoken and faithful words adorn your reputation. Maintain tact, and even if you have to rebuke someone they will be thankful. Think of it my friends! Just by obeying this commandment and caring more about your neighbor's reputation and honor than yourself, being truthful but respectful, people will like you more and treat you well. In loving your neighbor *by* obeying this command, you love yourself through

1 Proverbs 9:10

2 Mark 12:28-31

3 <https://bookofconcord.org/small-catechism/ten-commandments/>

your neighbor and receive great blessings!

The Benefits of Obedience

This is the exquisite secret that permeates the Book of Proverbs, repeated over and over again. Such is the way that God has ordered things, that obedience to His Commandments for the sake of our neighbors results in our neighbors treating us well and in our own immunity from various disasters. A key part of living well, living the *good* life, is living for others and being good to them.

If you have any doubts, remember that we are called to live by the example of our Lord Jesus. No one else has loved anyone as much as Jesus Christ loves us, no one has done anything for anyone else as much as Jesus has done for us; He healed, He taught, He comforted, He labored, and above all He paid the ultimate price for the sake of our salvation. And no one is as blessed as our Lord Jesus, who has been elevated above and beyond any man in terms of reputation, authority, power, and adoration. The more we emulate Him and practice benevolence to all men, the more we receive blessing from on high in the same way. Certainly, that means we suffer and are persecuted, but that does not preclude nor exclude being blessed in and through that, until we find ourselves with the ultimate blessing of eternal life at the Resurrection. Let us then walk in wisdom by walking in Agape love for one another.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.