

19 August 2018 Refugio and Goliad

Text: Proverbs 9:1-6 [added: Proverbs 8:1-21, all from Peterson's *The Message*]

Lady Wisdom has built and furnished her home;

It's supported by seven hewn timbers.

The banquet meal is ready to be served: lamb roasted,

Wine poured out, table set with silver and flowers.

Having dismissed her serving maids,

Lady Wisdom goes to town, stands in a prominent place,

And invites everyone within sound of her voice:

"Are you confused about life, don't know what's going on?

Come with me, oh come, have dinner with me!

I've prepared a wonderful spread – fresh-baked bread,

Roast lamb, carefully selected wines.

Leave your impoverished confusion and live!

Walk up the street to a life with meaning."

Proverbs 8:1-21

Do you hear Lady Wisdom calling?

Can you hear Madame Insight raising her voice?

She's taken her stand at First and Main,

At the busiest intersection.

Right in the city square

Where the traffic is thickest, she shouts,

"You – I'm talking to all of you,

Everyone out here on the streets!

Listen, you idiots – learn good sense!

You blockheads – shape up!

Don't miss a word of this – I'm telling you how to live well,

I'm telling you how to live at your best.

My mouth chews and savors and relishes truth –

I can't stand the taste of evil!

You'll only hear true and right words from my mouth;

Not one syllable will be twisted or skewed.

You'll recognize this as true —you with open minds;

Truth-ready minds will see it at once.

Prefer my life-disciplines over chasing after money,

And God-knowledge over a lucrative career.

For Wisdom is better than all the trappings of wealth;

Nothing you could wish for holds a candle to her.

"I am Lady Wisdom, and I live next to Sanity'

Knowledge and Discretion live just down the street.

The fear-of-God means hating Evil,

Whose ways I hate with a passion—

Pride and arrogance and crooked talk.

Good counsel and common sense are my characteristics;

I am both Insight and the Virtue to live it out.

With my help, leaders rule,

And lawmakers legislate fairly;

With my help, governors govern,

Along with all in legitimate authority.

I love those who love me;

Those who look for me find me.

Wealth and Glory accompany me—

Also, substantial Honor and a Good Name.

My benefits are worth more than a big salary, even a very big salary;

The returns on me exceed any imaginable bonus.

You can find me on Righteous Road—that's where I walk—

At the intersection of Justice Avenue,

Handing out life to those who love me,

Filling their arms with life—armloads of life!

A WALK WITH LADY WISDOM

Let us take a walk with Lady Wisdom. Since she harasses people at the corner of First and Main, we know that she lives nearby, actually at the intersection of Righteous Road and Justice Avenue. She is always near to people who have an open mind, a truth-ready mind, as she calls it. Now, a truth-ready mind is formed from a life discipline, a willingness to view existence with the perspective of God-knowledge. That may seem difficult for many of us who have taken the scientific method to heart, but God-knowledge is not a rejection of science, either its' methods or findings, but is an extension and enrichment of our understanding. One can describe a painting in terms of science: Such and such blend of chemicals producing specific colors. The physics of light will tell one a great deal about the creation of perspective, shadows and highlights in the painting. But physics will not explain the over-arching emotional content of the painting. That takes the perspective of God-knowledge. That is the perspective we must have to enable our walk with Lady Wisdom.

Money and careers: Almost as an aside, Lady Wisdom notes that the God-knowledge perspective is not compatible with chasing after money or pursuing a lucrative career. She is not saying that money and careers are unimportant, she is saying that they are the means to an end and not the end value itself. If we confuse ends with means, we are likely to depart from the life-discipline that links us to God and that allows us to understand our place in the universe. Which brings us to the first person we encounter on our walk with Lady Wisdom.

Sanity: It is her next-door neighbor, Sanity. We are going to also meet Knowledge and Discretion, but it is interesting that Sanity comes before them. Many years ago, there was a psychology professor at the University of Texas. What was then called an insane asylum was directly across from the psychology department and the professor would begin each semester's class by pointing to the building across the street and saying "we are sane and they are insane, because we outnumber them." Ouch, that is a definition that hurts because it is such a near miss! My definition of sanity, which I hope fits Lady Wisdom's needs, is a life that is largely characterized by making decisions and engaging in behaviors that are a blend of the knowledge that we have, the values we hold and the demands that are being made of us. If we take a firm grip on Sanity's hand we may then proceed to walk life's journey with passion and belief, though not necessarily, with comfort.

Knowledge: With us in tow, Lady Wisdom and Sanity take us just down the street to meet Knowledge. Why Sanity before Knowledge? Because only the truly sane are able to discover, embrace and use knowledge in a God-valued way. Which is to say that one must fully embrace science as the pathway to physical knowledge, even as we use God-logic and values to decide to what purposes that knowledge is to be put. If you cannot harmonize science and God, it is not that science is too big, but that your notion of God is too small. To be Sane and to have Knowledge is to be empowered. And now we know why Knowledge and Discretion live side by side, for to be empowered is to have power over oneself and others. To keep power from being destructive one must have Discretion.

Discretion: Discretion is to have the power to act or decide according to one's own judgement – and therein is the rub! Judgement. Not of others, but of ourselves. Knowledge without Sanity and Discretion is destructive and/or shallow, with its' connections to moral reality often clouded by a corrupt lust for power. Lady Wisdom introduces us to Discretion because the essence of God-valued humanness is to exercise our empowerment in a prudent and tactful manner. This is required of us whether we are rich or poor, humble or exalted! Our actions speak eloquently of our faith. It is not surprising that Wisdom, Sanity, Knowledge and Discretion are close friends living just down the street from one another! And what a street!

The Intersection of Righteous Road and Justice Avenue: Lady Wisdom tells us that it is the intersection of Righteous Road and Justice Avenue. What a wonderful address! It is where we find people with the Insight to examine problems and discover solutions and the Virtue to implement those solutions with God-values. Lady Wisdom tells us that she is standing at that intersection “handing out life to those who love me, filling their arms with life – armloads of life!” What a great metaphor: “armloads of life.” If we walk in the company of Lady Wisdom, and her friends, Sanity, Knowledge and Discretion, we will have armloads of life. Listen to Lady Wisdom's final exhortation:

“So, my dear friends, listen carefully;

Those who embrace these my ways are most blessed.

Mark a life of discipline and live wisely;

Don't squander your precious life.

Blessed the man, blessed the woman, who listens to me,

Awake and ready for me each morning,

Alert and responsive as I start my day's work.

When you find me, you find life, real life.

Amen!