

MBC – 10/24/2021 – Pastor Doug Thompson
“Two Women – Two Ways”
(The Lady and the Tramp)
 Proverbs 9

We’ve been studying the Epistle of James, the most practical book in the New Testament. James has been testing our faith to see if it’s genuine, and to *strengthen* our faith – haven’t you seen God use this Word in your lives, recently, as we face so many trials and struggles? We *desperately* need God’s wisdom. And we need it daily. So James asks in 3:13—

- James 3:13 ¹³Who is wise and understanding among you?

To answer that question, we’re going to back to Proverbs this morning – we’ll be back in James next Lord’s Day, but we’re going to lay the foundation by looking at the 9th chapter of Proverbs—

- Proverbs 9 ¹Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. ²She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table. ³She has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town, ⁴“Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” To him who lacks sense she says, ⁵“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. ⁶Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.” ⁷Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. ⁸Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. ⁹Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. ¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. ¹¹For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life. ¹²If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.
- ¹³The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. ¹⁴She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, ¹⁵calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, ¹⁶“Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” And to him who lacks sense she says, ¹⁷“Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” ¹⁸But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

*A few years ago Janice and I were celebrating our anniversary in downtown SF. We were staying right on the Embarcadero—a little bit different than life in Middletown!—and we walked down to the Westfield Shopping Center, and we were observing life: There was a crush of people moving on the sidewalks, and everywhere you look, advertisements—billboards, flashing neon signs, pictures, many of them sensual and sexual—luring people, tempting people to come in and partake. And in the middle of all of this, there was a guy walking back and forth with a big sign that said, “Jesus loves you.” And no one paid any attention to him. They weren’t offended, maybe amused, but they mostly ignored him.

- Isn’t that just like this Proverb? Multitudes follow the loud, easy way that promises pleasure and immediate gratification, while Jesus quietly invites anyone who will listen: “Come to me, you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest!” Most will ignore Him, but His sheep know His voice, and they will follow Him.

Beloved, Proverbs 9 summed up life 3,000 years ago when Solomon wrote it, and it still sums up life this morning. Doesn’t it? Little churches like ours struggle to remain faithful and keep preaching the Gospel

to the few people who will hear it. And while we are showing people the way to heaven, the way to hell is blasting its message all around us, pumping it into your kids' earbuds, on our TV sets, on the internet. I mean, just compare the size of two congregations in Middletown this morning: our church and Twin Pines Casino! (We are going to put in a gas station however . . . Uncle Rudi's.)

- This Proverb is so relevant to us. Don't you literally hear foolishness shouting at you, constantly: "This way to fulfillment and pleasure. . . follow this internet "influencer," follow this political ideology, "follow the science!"

Never in the history of mankind has foolishness had more inroads into our ears, eyes, and hearts than today. And never before have there been so many opportunities to take in God's wisdom in His Word. So which woman are you giving the most attention too? This morning I want to plead with you: be careful which woman you listen to, because one of these ladies will lead you to a feast and the other will lead you to a funeral—

- Proverbs 14:12 ¹²There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.
* * *

If you've read Proverbs recently you had to notice that within the first 9 chapters, Solomon warns his son about being seduced by the immoral woman over and over. So when we come to ch.9, he sums up the choice between wisdom and foolishness by using the metaphor of two women: Lady Wisdom and the Woman of Folly. The Lady and the Tramp.

- It's a metaphor—but it's based on reality: There is nothing more beautiful than a wise, gracious, godly woman. Solomon describes her in detail in ch.31. He says to his son: "Get a woman like this for your wife! A woman like this is more precious than silver, gold, or fine jewels!" She acts wisely, she speaks wisely, she is full of mercy and compassion. She is like a fountain, and people are drawn to her for her quiet wisdom and counsel. They study her example. And this woman is a moral, chaste woman. God's wisdom is like this woman. My wife is like this woman.
- On the other hand, foolishness is like the immoral woman. She might be beautiful, but it's only skin deep and mostly due to make-up, botox, and silicone. Underneath, it's wrinkles and scar tissue. She's a tragedy. She has squandered all God's good gifts just to grab momentary pleasure. She doesn't connect her actions with the consequences. She's the proverbial dumb blonde. And she's sexually immoral—not too many virgins among foolish women. And that's why, in Proverbs, sexual immorality symbolizes *foolishness* Because sexual immorality disregards long term consequences for short term gratification. It's the perfect example of foolishness. Let's look at these women—

I. The woman of wisdom. (vv.1-6)

A. Wisdom's house and feast

- Proverbs 9:1–2 ¹Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. ²She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table.

Lady wisdom is pictured here as a gracious and hospitable hostess inviting her guests into a beautiful, organized home: Martha Stewart meets Joanna Gaines! And when here guests come inside, they will lack nothing. All you need is here. And all the wisdom we need for life is in this Book, amen?—

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We come into this world ignorant of God and foolish, but this Book from God the Creator, teaches us about God, ourselves, this life and the next life. It corrects our foolishness, and then puts us on the path to righteousness.

Lady Wisdom builds a perfect house. The number 7 is symbolic of perfection in Scripture, so those seven pillars picture a house that is rock-solid, and aesthetically beautiful. It can withstand fire, flood, and hurricane force winds. And doesn't that remind you of what Jesus said—

- Matthew 7:24–27 ²⁴“Everyone then who *hears* these words of mine and *does* them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (Notice: he hears Jesus' words, and he does them) ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and *does not do them* will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

Beloved, there isn't a day when the sun comes up that you and I don't need wisdom for living in this crazy world, and it's all here (Bible). Pro.9:10 says that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Where do you get that? Only from this Book.

If you've been a Christian for awhile, you can take for granted the *profound wisdom* of God's Word – as compared to the foolishness of this world—

- Genesis 1:1 ¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
- Psalm 19:1 ¹The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

God made everything – and it shouts out His glory. How basic is that? Our kindergartners here at MCS know this. Isaac Newton, a believer, looked up and said, “This wonderful ordering of the sun, the planets, and the comets cannot but be the work of an intelligent, all-powerful being.”

But what does the world say?

- Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of DNA, said, "Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved." Our kindergartners are smarter than that!
- The late atheist Richard Dawkins, said, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." (Because they are – to display the glory of God!)

Genesis 1:27 says—

- ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Ah, so simple. There are two bathrooms: men's – women's. But what does our foolish world say? Do we need to go there? At last count there are at least 58 different "gender expressions," and our children are being told they can *choose*. I have to tell you about a video I watched this week—

- A young, 5'9" white guy, interviewed students on the campus of Washington Univ. He asked them how they would react if he said he was a woman – they all said, "Oh, that's wonderful, do your thing." Then he asked them how they would react if he said he was Chinese – again, "Well, if that's how you identify yourself, then OK." What would they say if he said he was 7 years old and should he be allowed to go to first grade – hesitation, "Well if you feel that's how you can reach your potential. . ." Then he asked how they would respond if he said he was 6'5" – again, no judgment. So he says, "So you're ok if I say that I am a 6'5" Chinese woman in the first grade?" Yeah that was okay because foolishness has no boundaries, right?

But God's word gives us boundaries for our thinking, and boundaries for our actions. Absolutes. Right and wrong. And if you know God, that doesn't stifle you and restrain you, it sets you free!

But we have to wake up to the fact that God's wisdom is hated by our world, and is increasingly becoming *criminal*—

- In Ontario, Canada, a new law allows the government to seize your children if you "refuse to accept [their] chosen 'gender identity' or 'gender expression.'"

The Scripture says, Children, "Obey your parents, in the Lord, for this is right." But the eternal wisdom of God is a crime in Canada!

But as I was thinking about Proverbs this week and all the wisdom it gives parents for raising their children. It occurred to me that even in this country, I could be cancelled (like I care) and possibly even arrested for just reading God's Word on biblical chastisement. So I think I will! Listen—

- Proverbs 13:24 ²⁴Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.
- Proverbs 19:18 ¹⁸Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.
- Proverbs 22:15 ¹⁵Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.
- Proverbs 23:13–14 ¹³Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. ¹⁴If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.
- Proverbs 29:15 ¹⁵The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.
- Proverbs 29:17 ¹⁷Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

Christian parents must choose: the wisdom of God, or the folly of the world. Lady Wisdom says, “follow me and you will have a lamp for your feet and a light for your path.”

B. Wisdom’s invitation

- Proverbs 9:3–6 ³She has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town, ⁴“Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” To him who lacks sense she says, ⁵“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. ⁶Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.”

The invitation is to those who are *simple* – your Bible might say “naïve,” the Heb. word means “open-minded.” Most people would say, “That’s a good thing.” The motto of the United Methodist Church is “Open hearts, open minds, open doors.” Solomon means it as a foolish thing! We should only open our minds to God’s truth and wisdom, and close our minds shut to man’s foolishness. The irony is that people who claim to be the most open-minded are actually the most close-minded to God’s Word. (*Alan Bloom “Closing of the American Mind” 1987*)

- But Lady Wisdom invites these open-minded, simpletons to come in and learn from her. Isn’t that the graciousness of God toward rebellious sinners? I’m sure glad the door was open for me when I was an unsaved fool!

**Bad Company.*

But there is a requirement here for entering Wisdom’s house: “*leave your simple ways.*” The correct translation of the Heb. is “*leave your simple ones.*” It’s talking about people. You can’t come in unless you leave your foolish friends at the door!

Are you listening to wisdom here? (And especially you young people.) Nothing will keep you from God’s wisdom like foolish friends. They will block the door. They don’t want you to go in there. You won’t be fun anymore.

- Janice and I *just* had this conversation with someone who has finally realized – after many years – that he must say to his friends: “I am *not* going over to your side – but I invite you to come over to my side, the Lord’s side. And if you won’t, then I’m going on without you.”

He finally got it: live with the wise or perish with the fools. You will be like the company you keep—

- Proverbs 13:20 ²⁰Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Some of our young people think that they can have God’s wisdom and still hang with the homeys who mock God, but it doesn’t work that way. Look at this amazing Proverb—

- Proverbs 14:7 ⁷Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge. (NAS says, “Or you will not discern words of knowledge.”)

I.e., spend enough time with fools (or foolish websites, or foolish podcasts – or foolish preachers!) and it will blunt your ability to discern wisdom, to obtain wisdom, and to live wisely.

- Over several decades of counseling folks, I can tell almost immediately if a person has gone to a secular counselor: they have all sorts of labels and terminology to evade and excuse their own sinful behavior – and honestly it’s almost impossible for them to think in biblical categories because their minds have been so twisted by man’s foolishness.

Doesn’t Ps.1 say: “How blessed is the man who does *not* walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!” What is God’s alternative?: “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.”

Beloved, if you are a new creature in Christ, He saved you out of your former foolishness – don’t turn back there. And steer clear of fools—

- Proverbs 14: 9 says that “fools mock at sin.” What you want to avoid, they consider a good time! And when you stand up for the wisdom of God in the midst of fools, it’s not going to fly—
- Proverbs 23:9 ⁹Don’t waste your breath on fools, for they will despise the wisest advice.
- Proverbs 29:9 ⁹If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet. (one translation says, you only get ranting and ridicule!)

Here’s the deal: if your friends won’t follow you into wisdom’s house, leave your homeys at the door, and you go in yourself. You have to choose—wisdom and life, or fools and death.

“Oh, but who will reach my friends for Jesus if I don’t?” Well not you, if you become just like them! And who do you think you are that you are the only one who can reach them for Christ? God doesn’t need you – or me. You have to ask yourself before you hang with unbelievers: “Am I going to be the missionary or the mission field?”

II. Two responses to Wisdom’s invitation. (vv.7-12)

The next 6 verses might seem like they are out of place, but they are showing the consequences of accepting Wisdom’s invitation, or Folly’s: you either become wiser and more teachable, or you become harder and more unteachable. Look at the scoffer:

A. *The Scoffer.*

- Proverbs 9:7–8 ⁷Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. ⁸Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

This sounds harsh: some people are so hardened to wisdom’s invitation that you shouldn’t even try to correct them. The more you try, the more they throw it back in your face and mock God. So leave them alone. Don’t give them any more ammunition.

*A scoffer is different than the simpleton or the fool in Proverbs. The scoffer mocks the truth. I heard about someone who was mocking a Christian for remaining a virgin—they were calling that stupid! That’s a scoffer. And they’re trouble. We look out for scoffers at MCS. It’s one thing for kids not to

understand spiritual truth because they are unsaved: we expect that--but it's another thing for them to mock and scoff at truth. This is how to handle those people—

- Proverbs 22:10 ¹⁰Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.

“But how will they learn, how will they be saved?” And how many will be poisoned and distracted by their mocking? Don't think that you are more compassionate than God. If He tells you to stop wasting your breath on a scoffer, then just do as He says. Jesus said, “*Don't cast your pearls before swine.*” But now, look at the wise man. He is the opposite of the scoffer—

A. *The Wise.*

- Proverbs 9:9–11 ⁹Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. [Proverbs says over and over that wise people learn from being rebuked and corrected.] ¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. ¹¹For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life.

The quickest test to see if you are on the path of wisdom or foolishness is to ask yourself: “How do I respond to biblical correction? To God's discipline? Do I listen? Am I open to the fact that I'm not perfect and I always need correction?”

- Psalm 141:5 ⁵Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it.

Wise people love to be corrected! ? – How did you respond the last you were corrected or criticized?

III. **The woman of folly. (vv.13-18)**

A. *Folly's behavior.*

- Proverbs 9:13 ¹³The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing.

She's loud, crass, and crude. She's no lady. The celebrity women of our world are mostly like this: they take great pleasure in being as crude and vulgar as any drunken sailor.

- Proverbs 30:20 ²⁰This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, “I have done no wrong.”

She's the opposite of that beautiful woman in Pro.31 who is wise and discreet and kind.

“She knows nothing.” She is completely ignorant of God's Word—

- Proverbs 5:5–6 ⁵Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; ⁶*she does not ponder the path of life*; her ways wander, and she does not know it.

I.e., She doesn't think about eternal things! It's all here and now. She is an existentialist: The most certain, and unavoidable fact of humanity is death, and she lives as though it won't happen! Now that's stupid.

- I read about an actress who spends \$20,000 a month trying to look younger—and she's not even 40. And we've all seen the celebrities who look like cartoon characters with their facelifts, chin and cheek implants and lip plumps. But what happens after they die? Doesn't enter their minds. They don't ponder the path of life.

B. Folly's invitation

- Proverbs 9:14–17 ¹⁴She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, ¹⁵calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, ¹⁶"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" And to him who lacks sense she says, ¹⁷"Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."

Sounds a lot like Wisdom's invitation, doesn't it? Except she's loud and brassy. And she's not yelling out, "This way to pain and destruction, and oh yeah, after you die, you go to hell." No, she promises pleasure and delivers pain; she promises life and delivers death. She's a liar and a deceiver. Every time. Why do we think she is so beautiful?

And she's a tramp. She's immoral, she has no shame. That comes across in v.17: "to him who lacks understanding she says, "Stolen water is sweet; And bread eaten in secret is pleasant." If you go back to 5:15,16 you see the parallel—it's talking about illicit, immoral sex.

- When you leave the straight path of God's Word, foolishness pulls you in to the immediate gratification of immorality. And what a trainwreck that is! Do you need Illustrations? You don't need illustrations. . .

But what she's selling is the thrill of sin because it's sinful. It's *stolen* water, bread eaten in *secret*. It's the *rush* that she's selling. And we all know that pull, it's embedded in our sin natures. Augustine wrote about it 1600 years ago in his Confessions. Listen to this—

I had a desire to commit robbery, and did so, compelled to it by neither hunger nor poverty, but through a contempt for well-doing and a strong impulse to iniquity. For I pilfered something which I already had in sufficient measure, and of much better quality. I did not desire to enjoy what I stole, but only the theft and the sin itself. There was a pear tree close to our own vineyard, heavily laden with fruit, which was not tempting either for its color or for its flavor. Late one night--having prolonged our games in the streets until then, as our bad habit was--a group of young scoundrels, and I among them, went to shake and rob this tree. We carried off a huge load of pears, not to eat ourselves, but to dump out to the hogs, after barely tasting some of them ourselves. Doing this pleased us all the more because it was forbidden. Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart--which You did pity even in that bottomless pit. Behold, now let my heart confess to You what it was seeking there, when I was being gratuitously wanton, having no inducement to evil but the evil itself. It was foul, and I loved it. I loved my own undoing. I loved my error--not that for which I erred but the error itself. A depraved soul, falling away from security in You to destruction in itself, seeking nothing from the shameful deed but shame itself. (Book 2 IV:9)

Augustine nailed it: Sin makes you stupid. It isn't logical. There's no rational reason why evil should be attractive just because it's evil. This is a spiritual deal. From birth there is something spiritually wrong with our hearts: we are born congenitally foolish. The natural attraction to sin and rebel against God and His wisdom isn't due to lack of intelligence. It's because we are born dead in our sins, and cut off from the life of God.

How else can you explain the fact that people reject the Gospel? It's true. And it's good news. Jesus said something that blows my mind everytime I read it—

- John 8:45–46 ⁴⁵But *because* I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

No one could disprove what Jesus said or did. He is the way the truth and the life, but it was because He spoke the truth that they disbelieved: They wouldn't be swayed by truth, or the facts, because they were committed to unbelief. Beloved, that is a spiritual problem—

- 1 Corinthians 2:14 ¹⁴The natural person (unsaved, as we come from the womb) *does not* accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is *not able* to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Unwilling and unable. This is why Paul said, “*The Word of the cross is folly (moronic) to those who are perishing.*”—

- Romans 1:21–22 ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became – fools.

Beloved, Christians shouldn't be scratching their heads: *This* is the explanation for the irrational foolishness in our unraveling world: This explains why people can believe that a 5'9" white man is really a 6'5", 7 year old, Chinese woman. And it also explains why people can think it's okay to kill a baby in its mother's womb: They have rejected God and His wisdom in the Gospel: that God sent His Son, Jesus, to take away our sins and give us eternal life.

But when you believe in Him, the darkness is removed. The lights come on, and you see the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” And that's when wisdom comes—

- 1 Corinthians 1:30 ³⁰And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us *wisdom from God*.

No other Man ever died for you. He is wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. You will never escape your foolishness until you come to Him. Do that today.

And if you are a **Christian**, you are *still* in a life-or-death tug-a-war to keep from being seduced by the foolishness of the world. And you have to pull harder than the world is pulling on you. Please listen:

- Romans 12:2 ²Do not be conformed (shaped by) this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind (i.e., immerse yourself in God's Word until it overrules the foolishness of the

world, and you think biblically) that . . . you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Psalm 1:1–2 ¹Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ²but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

IV. You choose.: The Lady, or the Tramp? Feast or Funeral?

Will it be the Lady or the Tramp? A feast or the funeral? The feast that Lady Wisdom offers is ultimately fulfilled in that Marriage Supper of the Lamb that awaits all of God’s children. But look at what awaits the fool—

- Proverbs 9:18 ¹⁸But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

I want to close by reading from the first chapter of Proverbs, and I want you to think again about the busy streets in SF, and that Christian carrying the sign, and people passing by, shaking their heads and laughing—

- Proverbs 1:20–32 ²⁰Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; ²¹at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: ²²“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? ²³If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. [But here is God’s verdict in heaven:] ²⁴Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, ²⁵because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, ²⁶I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, ²⁷when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. ²⁸Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me.
- ²⁹Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, ³⁰would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, ³¹therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. ³²For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them.