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Series: Proverbs: Living Wisely in a Fallen World
Message: The Call of Wisdom

Transcribed Message
July 21, 2019
Proverbs 8

We begin a little different this morning because we come to a place in the book of Proverbs that provides a clear point of transition. We come to Proverbs chapter 8 and 9 and in these chapters we have the final call of the writer of Proverbs. He's saying go ahead and tell God that you're a fool, if you will as we understand that word, and say I need the wisdom of the sage. I need the wisdom that the book of Proverbs gives to me.

We come to this break and it's a good point of break because Bonnie and I are going to be gone for a couple of Sundays as we get away and do a little "studycation" as we like to call it. We do a little study and a little vacation and have our books and our Bibles and our hiking boots and it makes for a great time together. When we get back, and then August 18 we'll kick off the fall again. What we've done every fall for many, many years is we usually have a theme that we start the fall off with. This year we're going to be doing "People on a Mission". A couple of years ago, we did "People of the Book". Last year we did "People of the Spirit". This year we're going to do "People on a Mission". So that's what we'll look forward to. Then we'll jump back into the book of Proverbs and we'll take on a myriad of topics that we find in Proverbs 10 all the way to the 31st chapter.

This morning as we look at this 8th chapter, we see that wisdom is making us an offer we can't refuse. Favor with God and a full and meaningful life. What more could we want, right? Let's take a quick look at where we've been and where we're going. We look back on this section of Proverbs and where we've been and just look very quickly at what we've seen to this point. wisdom says don't give into peer pressure. Wisdom protects us from harm. It defines for us what true success is. In that 3rd chapter – trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He'll direct your paths. It helps us to see how it is that we must be passing on this truth. What a great reminder. Robert and Karis wanting to get the

gospel and the truth into the lives of children. That's what we're to be doing, right? We're passing on the truth to generation after generation. It keeps us out of trouble. It all starts with right-thinking. Guard your heart with all diligence for out of it flow the issues of life. That's the crucial point. We are the ones who want to be thinking rightly. We looked in the 5th chapter at the matter of the sexual relationship and the gift that God has given within marriage. We looked at the first part of chapter 6 and said here are three things to avoid: Don't be cosigning a note for somebody, be careful that you aren't falling into a lazy spirit, and don't be a divisive person. Then last Sunday we looked at the folly of adultery. That brings us to where we are this morning. Where are we going?

Somebody said that the 8th chapter of Proverbs is the summit of Old Testament discipleship. That's a cool way to think of this chapter. The summit of Old Testament discipleship and what it is calling us to. So let's do a contrast because it's not by just happenstance that chapter 7 is this hard and difficult word, and then you come to chapter 8 and we have this very positive, bright outlook that is given to us when wisdom calls to us and we respond. Let's just contrast these two chapters before we look at this 8th one together. Madam Folly calls people into darkness. Lady Wisdom is the one who brings us into the light. There is openness and transparency. She's not afraid to be seen or to be out in the open. Madam Folly calls us into immoral relationships. Lady Wisdom is drawing us into holiness, into all that is good and righteous, and promoting the things of God in our life. Madam Folly is faithless and she's fickle, whereas Lady Wisdom is dependable and reliable. Folly is without heart and is cold and uncaring, whereas Wisdom brings into our experience what true love really is. Folly presents to us fleeting pleasure. It's all temporal. It's all temporary. Here today and it's gone. Wisdom brings us everlasting honor. Folly obviously is selfish and self-centered and self-promoting, thinking only of oneself. Wisdom is always looking to serve, always looking for somebody that they can minister to. Then ultimately, Madam Folly brings death, even though those who step into that world don't see it coming in that way. But we know Proverbs says that when we make those choices the end is the way of death. Wisdom brings us life. If there was ever a point in this morning's outline that you didn't get something because we're moving quickly don't forget you can always go to the website or the church app. The outline is all filled out and all of the answers are given to you.

Let's look this morning at wisdom and the fact that wisdom never gives up on us. Wisdom never gives up. It begins in the 8th chapter with the plea of wisdom. I want you to note in the first three verses where she is calling: "Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portal she cries aloud." This is by the way very similar to chapter 1 and in verse 20. You might remember that we saw there: "Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks." Wisdom cares too much to be silent. Wisdom can't be silenced. Wisdom is pleading with us with regard to what it is that she offers to us. Remember we said that wisdom is in some respect easily defined as God's plan for your life. Wisdom, when we read the book of Proverbs, is seeing ourselves and seeing life from God's perspective. Here we have this amazing call to us saying this is the way, walk in it. This is God's will, God's plan, God's purpose for your life.

I want you to see two things. It's available everywhere. It's available everywhere. It's available in the public square. There's a lot of hesitancy anymore in the day and culture in which we live and we find ourselves increasingly pushed towards being silenced. Here is wisdom. Wisdom will not be silenced. Wisdom is going to speak. She's going to speak properly, using the right decorum and in all of the things that positively reflect on the way a wise man and a wise woman would speak. But it's available everywhere. It's in the heights, the crossroads, the gates, the entrance to the portals. In other words, wherever people are that's where wisdom is calling from. Wisdom wants to be in your home. Wisdom wants to go with you to work. Wisdom wants to be with you when you have fun and when you do whatever it is that you're going to be doing that day. Wisdom wants to be right there with you.

Notice secondly, wisdom doesn't wait to be found. Wisdom doesn't wait to be found. It moves towards us. I want you to see that the Word is not passive. The Word is active. It is the very thing that the writer of Hebrews says that the Word of God is alive and it is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. The Word does not remain silent. The Word is active in its pursuit. I think what we take from this opening point is God's wisdom is not hidden and it is available to anybody who's looking for it. so if we're

looking for wisdom we have this plea to us that wherever you are wisdom is available to you.

Notice secondly who it is that she calls in verses 4 and 5: "To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man. O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense." The first thing you see is she calls to all classes of people. She calls to all classes of people. In verse 4, there are two different words that are used to describe who she calls to. To you, o man, I call, and my cry is to the children of man. What you have in those two different words are really the spectrum of the classes and the categories of people. On the one hand, you have those that would be referenced as what we might think of as the affluent, the influencers. Then you have those that are described in that same verse at the end of it as the children of man. This is a word that just speaks of the masses of humanity. Wisdom calls, in terms of the categories of people that she's calling to, to this broadest spectrum of humanity. She's calling to the nobility, to the powerful, to those who have no influence, who have no power. She's calling to the educated. She's calling to the uneducated people who have never had the opportunity to have a formal education. Wisdom still calls. She calls to the rich and to the poor. There's this broad sense of the categories of people that wisdom calls to. To the professional. To the laborer. Nobody's left out in the call of wisdom.

What wisdom does not do, notice secondly, is she does not call to all people. She does not call to all people. And you say what do you mean by that? I thought you just said she's calling. She's calling to all categories of people, but interestingly she's not calling to all people. Remember that as we've gone through Proverbs, as we read our English translation, there are different words that we have sometimes that is translated fool, sometimes scoffer. But it is not always the same Hebrew word. So when we went through this early on remember we said that there is first of all that person who is *pethi*. *Pethi* is one who is naïve, who is uncommitted. They are easily swayed. They're following whatever the latest trend is and the Bible calls that person a fool. and then you noted that we saw this word *kesil*. And the word *kesil* refers to those who are dull, insensitive, who are caught up in the things of the world. They don't really have a lot of time and attention for spiritual things. Maybe they're in church on a Sunday or two, but there's really no heartbeat for this wisdom. That's the people, those first two, wisdom

calls out to. That's what we have in verse 5: "O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense." That's the first two categories of fool in the book of Proverbs.

But then there are two other categories. *Nobhal* is the third Hebrew word. It is the same word that we had seen in Psalm 14: one when it says the fool has said in their heart there is no God. To this one, the Bible says they hate God, they hate wisdom, and they have no interest in spiritual things. In fact, they delight in evil. In Proverbs 14 and verse 6: "A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain." That is this person. Whatever interest they have in this passing moment is short-circuited because in their heart they're really not interested in learning the things of God. Then the last word is the word *letz* and it's the arrogant one. It's the know-it-all. Proverbs says don't hang out with these people. Stay away from these people. These people aren't going to do anything but bring trouble into your life.

When you go through Proverbs, wisdom calls out to these first two categories and says here I am. Come. Learn. Take in what I have to offer. But wisdom doesn't offer itself to those last two categories. To me it is very similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 7 in that hard word when He said don't be casting your pearls before swine. A hard word. Jesus is in effect saying there are some people that as you have encounters with them they prove themselves to be so uninterested, so hostile, so unconcerned with spiritual things that at some point you just stop bringing to them the pearls, the valuable things, the gospel even, because they're so hardened in their heart. Now here is a word of warning to all of us. There is wisdom available to all categories of people but it isn't available to all people. So wisdom calls out in these first five verses and I want you to see why it is that we should listen.

This is the bulk of the chapter. This takes us from verse 6 all the way to verse 31. We start off by looking at the praise of wisdom. Why is it that we should be listening to wisdom? Wisdom is calling in all of these venues, all of these places. Why do we listen? Because first of all wisdom will bring into our life moral excellence. Moral excellence. We're going to read through these verses. So we start at verse 6 this time: "Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right; for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. They are all straight to him who

understands, and right to those who find knowledge. Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.” Verse 6 begins with a command and that command is that we’re supposed to listen. We’re supposed to hear what it is that wisdom has to say. It’s noble things that we’re to listen to. Listen. This is what we want to understand. As you go through Proverbs and you understand what wisdom is doing and how wisdom calls to us and who wisdom is, we can rightly say that wisdom and godliness are synonyms. Wisdom and godliness are directing us to the same things. This is what you see when we talk about the fact that wisdom is seeing life and seeing ourselves and seeing God from the proper perspective. That’s a mature believer. That’s a believer who’s grown in their walk with God, who sees life from God’s perspective, who sees the things that God is doing in their life from a defined viewpoint. Godliness and wisdom are really synonyms. To walk in wisdom is to walk in integrity. To walk in wisdom is to be a maturing and growing believer. It is one who wants to honor and please God.

Two weeks ago, I read a prayer of John Stott. John Stott was an English theologian and church leader who wrote all kinds of books and commentaries. I read that every day John Stott would pray a Trinitarian prayer. This is what he would pray. He would pray to the Father: “Heavenly Father, I pray that I may live this day in Your presence and please You more and more.” What is the heartbeat of that prayer? I want to honor God. I want to please God. I want to walk in integrity. I want to walk in wisdom. He said, “Lord Jesus, I pray that this day I may take up my cross and follow You.” If I can use a little paraphrasing, I think he is simply saying Lord Jesus, I want to submit to Your Lordship in every area of my life, whatever that looks like. I take up my cross every day because I want to walk in wisdom. Then he would pray to the Holy Spirit: “Holy Spirit, I pray that this day You will fill me with Yourself and cause Your fruit to ripen in my life.” Then he would end it with: “Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons in one God, have mercy upon me.” I’ve included that in my list of things that I want to pray every day because he’s basically saying Father, I want to walk in the wisdom of Your Word. Lord Jesus, areas of my life that aren’t where I should be, show those to me so that I’m walking as You would have me walk. Holy Spirit, You’re the one who is going to

take this word and this truth into my life and empower me to do these things and enable me and equip me to do them.

I love the way wisdom is described here. Just notice that it is described as being noble and right and truth and righteous and straight. What does that remind you of? Philippians chapter 4 verse 8. Paul says all of these things are the things that you ought to be thinking about every day. You're familiar with this verse: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." That to me is what's happening here in this matter of moral excellence. The gospel. The gospel is what lifts us up. The gospel is what lifts us up. But the gospel lifts us up by telling us things that sometimes are hard to hear. The gospel doesn't just whisper all positive, encouraging, wonderful things into our ear. The gospel tells us what is real. The gospel tells us what is truth. The gospel tells us the way that we're to go and that's what this is talking about here. This is the wisdom of God telling me the truth about myself every day, telling me the truth about how I'm living, walking, speaking and talking. That's what wisdom will do for us. that's why I'm supposed to be in this book every day, because it's the mirror of the Word of God that I'm looking into. We have moral excellence.

Now look at practical living in verses 12 to 21. "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; I have strength. By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly. I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me. Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, granting an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries." Do you see why they're calling chapter 8 the pinnacle, the summit of discipleship in the Old Testament? This call to moral excellence. This call to practical living. What is needed to be successful in life is not that you have a degree from a certain university. It isn't that you have some level of IQ that is above everybody else. It isn't necessary to be successful that you

have the right opportunities every time that you're looking for them. It's not that you know all the right people, that you're connected in the right ways, that you're living in the right neighborhood and driving the right cars. That's not success according to the Word of God. Success according to the Word of God is walking in wisdom. It is this practical living that the writer of Proverbs is pushing us towards. What it really is saying is that wisdom is what causes us to see ourselves and to see life the way God does. I'm taking wisdom, he says, above everything else. I'm giving wisdom priority.

Here is what wisdom tells us. Here's what Proverbs tells us. It tells us you can't have it all. I know the message of the world is you can have it all. The writer of Proverbs says you can't have it all. You have to decide. It's an either/or. You either get the wisdom of God and you walk in the wisdom of God and you walk in integrity before God and you see in your life the practical expression of the righteousness of Christ in your life as a follower of Christ. Or you give yourself to the things of the world. You cannot add wisdom on to choosing the world as the priority of your life. You can't have it all. You and I have to decide. We have to pick. Isn't that what Jesus said? Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all that other stuff will take care of itself. What a wonderful philosophy by way to guide our life! So what we can't do is pick the world and think we're going to be able to add wisdom on to it. Wisdom says no, you pick me. You pick me first.

Notice in verses 14, 15 and 16. We would paraphrase it today and say if presidents, if Congress, if governors, if mayors, if legislators, if councilmembers would walk in the wisdom of God, what a blessing it would be. Just think of the stories in the Bible of a man like Joseph who goes to the Egypt, certainly not of his own choice, but God is raising him up. He becomes second in command of all of Egypt. Joseph leads in wisdom and you see the blessing of God poured out on his life. Go to the book of Daniel. Daniel, in a very similar circumstance, doesn't go to Babylon by his own choice. He is taken as a captive but God honors his faithfulness, his integrity, and He raises him up to where he is one of the leading political leaders in Babylon. You see the wisdom of God on this man's life. Read in the Old Testament of the 20 northern Kings of the nation of Israel after the nation had a Civil War and split. You'll read of the 20 northern Kings and every one of them was a fool. Every one of them governed totally apart from the

wisdom of God. You see the chaos and the wreckage and the anarchy throughout the nation because of it.

There is a list of stories within ancient literature. Many of them include a story of a flood. A lot of ancient literature has accounts that are similar to a great flood in our Scriptures. One of those is the writings of ancient Babylon. In the Babylonian ancient literature there is a hero in their flood story names Nepheshta. Nepheshta is described in this story as being a brilliant man. He's the smartest man in the room. What he builds by way of a boat for the flood is 40 x 40 x 40. A ship that is 40 x 40 x 40 would've sunk like a rock. In a flood, it would just sunk like a rock. He's the smartest man in the room. In Babylonian lore and history, he is promoted as being a brilliant man. In the Biblical story, we had a man named Noah. Noah is never said to be brilliant. He was never said to be the smartest guy around. But you know what was said of Noah? It was said that Noah was a righteous man. Noah was a godly man. Noah was a wise man. He builds a boat that was 450 feet long and 75 feet wide and 40 feet high. All it could do was float. Exactly what God intended for it to do. That just shows you the contrasting views of the way of the world and the way of God. You don't have to have all of the things that the world offers to be successful in God's eyes, but you do have to have practical wisdom and practical righteousness.

Now look at the role of creation. This is fascinating. The role of creation verses 22 to 31: "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His work, the first of His acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, before He had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. When He established the heavens, I was there; when He drew a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when He established the fountains of the deep, when He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him, like a master workman, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing before Him always, rejoicing in His inhabited world, and delighting in the children of man." What you have described here has been described as the glorious crescendo of the most profound

happiness of wisdom. Isn't that great? This is the crescendo of this chapter. It all has to do with this incredible description of God being the cosmic designer, of wisdom being there with God from the beginning. Why was wisdom there with God from the beginning? Because wisdom is part of the attributes of God. It's part of the character of God. When you talk about wisdom, you're talking about godliness. When you talk about wisdom, you're talking about something that we should desire with great passion because we want to reflect the righteousness and the wisdom of God Himself.

So we have this delicate balance in creation. We have this great design that God Himself has put forward. When we look at our world and we look at creation, here we are in this place we call Earth. It's just hanging out here the middle of space, perfectly situated, designed, and preserved. Everything hanging in a delicate but perfect balance. All the gases around us, the water, the air, gravity, the closeness to the sun being perfect, although we might like it just a little bit further away these days. But you know, if it was, we would be frozen. If we were any closer, we wouldn't survive. So we have all of this in this perfect balance.

Look at verse 30 and 31. This is so cool, because you have this expression that this is the daily delight. "I was daily His delight, rejoicing before Him always, rejoicing in His inhabited world." Those are not the normal Hebrew words for joy and rejoicing. They're words that speak of laughter and almost a playful delight. This is the heart of God as He looked at His creation. Of course, at the pinnacle of that creation, he describes as being the children of men. That's us. We're the pinnacle. We're the ones who reflect the image and likeness of God. This beautiful and amazing complex world that God has created and designed.

You might remember that yesterday 50 years ago we landed a couple of men on the moon. Apollo 11. I read this last week that one of the first things that Buzz Aldrin, who was an elder of a Presbyterian Church outside of Houston, had communion. The first food and drink on the moon was communion. Buzz Aldrin asked NASA if he could take communion elements with him to the moon. NASA kind of downplayed it because Madeline Murray O'Hare had already brought about lawsuits. Other astronauts had gone around in space and read from the book of Genesis, and she said that was a violation of rule in our church and state. So they let Buzz do that but they did not make it

a public expression of what he was doing. But he did it. The first things that were eaten and drank on the moon were communion elements, acknowledging Jesus as Lord over all of creation. That is what this is saying here. The wisdom of God in creation.

Now look at the promise as we close: “And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.” What is the promise of wisdom? The promise of wisdom first to those who obey there is great reward. There is great reward. You’re going to be blessed. You’re going to be wise. You’re going to have life, favor from the Lord. I say to you as I did at the beginning, who doesn't want that? Who doesn't want that blessing on their life? To those who obey and walk in wisdom, there's great reward.

Then notice to those who seek they will most certainly find. “Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.” Verse 17. Remember we read that. “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.” You will not come up empty if you seek after wisdom with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. Wisdom makes us an offer that only a fool would refuse. Favor with God, a full and meaningful life – who could ask for more than that? What more could we want?

What do we take away? There is nothing to lose and everything to gain in asking for and seeking after wisdom. It ultimately is going to lead you to the supreme treasure, Jesus Himself. Jesus, according to Colossians 1, is the embodiment of wisdom. Jesus is the true expression of wisdom. To walk in wisdom is to do no less than to walk in the ways of Christ. To treat each other the way wisdom calls us to is to do no less than to treat others the way Christ did. To long for, to seek after the wisdom of God is to do nothing less than Jesus did. As a young man, He grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. So when we seek wisdom, there's nothing that we could possibly miss out on. There's everything to be gained because ultimately we are at the feet of the supreme treasure, Jesus Himself. Jesus said what is it going to profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your soul. The world says you can have it all. Jesus

says actually you can't. Whoever has the Son has life and whoever does not have the Son does not have life.

Our hope, prayer, desire, longing for you this morning is that you know this wisdom and you know this one who is called the wisdom of God, Jesus Christ. Jesus, in obedience to the Father, came to this earth, lived a perfect life, bore witness to who God is, to what He is, and all the things that relate to the person and work of God. He went to that cross. He did so for me and He did so for you. He did so because I'm a sinner and you're a sinner. Sin separates us from God. All of our works and efforts are only going to leave us short because what God requires of every one of us is perfect righteousness. The only one who is perfect is Jesus. So we need to get into the ark. We need to get into the boat with Jesus. We need to put our faith and trust in what He has done and what He's done alone. That would be our heart's desire for you.

Let's pray. Father God, what a call has come to us in the Word of God and in the Living Word, the Lord Jesus, that we could be in a personal relationship with You, that we can call You our Father, that we can call You our Savior, that we can know Your indwelling presence in our life by Your Spirit. Lord, I pray that Your Spirit would so work in anyone's heart here this morning who does not know Jesus in that personal way, does not know what it means to have their sins paid for in full and might now be thinking that they can work their way to heaven. What You have said is that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done but it's according to Your mercy that You have saved us. We thank You. may we pursue this wisdom with all our heart, all our soul, all our might. In Jesus's name, amen.