

Hope from Wisdom

Scripture: Proverbs 16: 1-9, 33 (33 is key verse)

Date: February 14, 2021

HOPELESS

This past week has seen brutal temperatures across Canada - especially here in Calgary Alberta with the lows dipping into the - 30's with a wind chill in the -40's. The weather sucked out the breath from your lungs and extra time was needed to bundle up to go out and extra time needed to warm up when coming back in. There was a growing discouragement with little hope for relief in near future.

Our world has also been struggling with another type of ice age over the last eleven months due to the Covid 19 pandemic. We have been separated from the warm of face to face connections and have experienced the chill of not being able to fully engage a future due to the bleakness of knowing when it will come or how.

But the culture in which we live has experienced bleakness and brokenness long before Covid 19 arrived. The certainty of our lives were already fading with the rapid changes and pace in life and social connections were already at risk of drifting into different directions. There was – for many – a lack of purpose / a lack of passion in their lives and there was a lack of wisdom on how to live their lives.

We have been living lives that seemingly were failing on a human level. The old Jewish proverb – we plan and God laughs – seems to indicate that our lives were also failing on a divine level as well. We had hopes but they seemed to keep falling short.

HOPEFUL

Yet we keep on hoping. Perhaps it is because hope is perhaps the one thing that keeps us alive and that hope is the last thing ever lost. Quotes such as these are helpful to remind us of the existence of the possibility of better. An inspiration – a motivation – an epiphany to guide us into the next realms of our existence.

Epiphany by definition is:

A sudden insight

A profound understanding (an AHA moment of something new and brilliant)

But Epiphany is also – by definition – a divine manifestation or a revelation from God. Where something mysterious and majestic explodes in the mundane of everyday life. Dale Bruner writes Matthew commentary about Epiphany – into this human mystery – God speaks and that God reveals Himself and His desires. Epiphany is the season of the church where we are encouraged – and challenged – to take the spark of faith and life that we found in Christmas and allow it to grow and encourage us into the new year.

But we need more than inspiration or motivation to live – we also want direction in how to live. Steps for success if you will and proverbs are ways that we look at in order to obtain this wisdom. Proverbs are short sayings that contain large wisdom and are memorable and applicable.

There are many cultural sayings that are proverbial:

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link

Actions speak louder than words

A leopard can't change their spots

Proverbs about hope are found in different cultures as well. The Irish Proverb declares that - *hope is the physician of each misery*. There is an Arabic Proverb which declares that - *he (she) who has health has hope and He (she) who has hope has everything*

But as smart as we are on a human level – in describing hope and in defining hope – it is apparent that we continue to live in hopeless arenas of life. In order to find a true and fulfilling hope we must seek it beyond our own capacity. True hope is found in God.

Larry Crabb in his book - 66 Love Letters – writes that *the [God offers] is the wisdom by which God created the world and God made life to work only if lived according to His design*. Tim Keller in his book Navigating Life – writes that *Proverbs is less about how God guides that whom God is guiding. People want a technique for guidance such as five steps to good decisions but God wants wise character that is hard won over a lifetime*.

Perhaps if one were to visualize hope as a candle which gives light (inspiration – epiphany) and heat (direction – energy – passion). But in order for the candle to work it needs an outside flame to light the wick or ignite the flame.

Only God can create the inspiration and the direction needed for our hopes to be fulfilled. The old Jewish proverb – we plan and God laughs is not a futile perspective of uncaring God laughing at us but IS a faith perspective of a caring God loving us.

HELPFUL

Proverbs 16 over and over again reminds us of God's wisdom of life for us and God's power to live for Him. A presence that gives us a hope we could not achieve or even deserve. Nevertheless God invites us to seek out this hope and to live within it.

Proverbs 16: 33 mirrors vs. 1- 9 in that they remind us that hope is found in God and God gives it to us. Verse 33 in the NIV speaks of how the lot is cast and yet every decision is from the Lord. The NLT rephases this verse as - *we cast the dice but the Lord determines how they fall*. We are reminded of the sovereignty of God at work BUT ALSO our role in participating.

Verse 1 shows that God gives revelation. To the humans belong the plans but God gives the proper answer reminds us that God gives the right understanding of what is needed through the scriptures. Verses 2-3 shows that God gives intention where we are to commit to God our plans but that God

understandings our motivation and seeks to give us a purer intention / motivation. Finally in verse 9 – God gives direction. Humans plans the steps but God establishes the course. God gives the destination and the directions to get there.

But God doesn't just sit on the sidelines and give inspiration and wisdom from afar. God comes into the game. Epiphany, wisdom, hope and love - all become more real, memorable and more practical when viewed through the lens of Jesus Christ. He who walked on earth as one of us and lived amongst us preaching a gospel of hope – that He only He could bring.

A hope found in His teaching of love, forgiveness and redemption. A hope found in His death on the cross that we might be forgiven and a hope found in His resurrection from the grave – that we might be freed to live with a hope here in this world and in the world yet to come.

AMEN