

Proverbs 1:20-33

“Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded, and because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices. For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them; but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.”

A little over 20 years ago my son and I were driving from North Carolina to Rhode Island for a visit. We caught Inter-state 95 in Fayetteville NC and drove that all the way to New England, except for major cities such as Washington, Baltimore, Philly, and NY where we took either 295 or 495 around to avoid going into those cities. For the most part we stayed on 95 until we reached Connecticut. As we were approaching Richmond VA we ran into construction, but this did not alarm me because during my four years in college Richmond was always under construction. So why would now be any different?

As we approached Richmond we veered to the right, which I never remember doing but before long we were cruising along at a good clip. When my son Kevin said, “Dad, how come there are no cars on this road?” I had not really noticed this, but he was right. But we were still making real good time and the road, which looked new, was wide open. But the further we drove the more I thought about Kevin’s question “Dad, how come there are no cars on this road?” It was becoming apparent to me that we were driving on the new outer loop around Richmond. What became evident to us

when we reached 95 again and that we were not supposed to be on that road yet. We made real good time, but the road was closed.

How many of us have either avoid or just ignore the road signs in our lives? We ignore the road signs in our lives mainly because we believe they are not meant for us, they are meant for others. Think about how many stop signs, yield signs, caution signs we just roll through and never give them a second thought. Let's face facts; most warning signs are posted to keep foolish people from doing foolish things. "Wet Paint" or "Do Not Touch" or "Use Other Door" or "Road Closed" these are all warning signs which most if not all of us ignore with regularity.

I have preached "*Love thy neighbor*" but when people hear that they believe that's not meant for me because I did that back in 70's & 80's. I have preached about tithing and people tune me out because they gave back in the 90's & 2000 and besides tithing sermons are not meant for me. I have preached about giving your time and talents to areas of ministry within the church and community, to which I've heard "I helped with the nursery, children, or youth way back when mine were coming along what you're talking about preacher is meant for those other people.

Smart people don't need counsel, right? Warning signs are only meant for the foolish, right? A decision to heed warning signs not only shows wisdom on our part, but it also reveals both a humble spirit and a willingness to admit that others just might have a greater knowledge or experience than we do. What warning signs are you talking about? I follow all warning signs preacher. Do you really?

In this morning's passage Solomon portrays wisdom as a woman standing in the public square calling out for all to hear, listen again to

Verses 22-25;

“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Give heed to my reproof; behold, I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, and you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof.”

Wisdom is calling out to all of us. Can you hear her? Do you hear her? Notice she does not plead nor is there any panic in her voice. She has nothing to lose only we do; instead she cautions us of the consequences which lie ahead for those of us who choose to continue ignoring her. She informs us what the consequences will be for ignoring her warnings, not what could happen but what will happen. Are we listening, are you listening or are you driving down life's road ignoring all the road closed signs.

In **verse 24** she said *"I have called and you refused to listen,"* the Hebrew word for refused actually means "stubbornly refuse" or "emphatically refuses." This term is used for those defying authority and deliberately rejecting what they know to be right. What is it God's wisdom is calling you to do or not do? What wisdom are we emphatically refusing to follow? How many of us drive right through the "Road Closed" sign in **Hebrews 10:25** *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is?"* This refers to gathering together in fellowship and worship. Or **John 13:34** *"that you love one another. Just as I have loved you?"* Do we really love each other as Jesus loved us? Or **Acts 2:42** *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking*

of bread and the prayers.” Do we devote ourselves to Scriptural teachings or is it just some periodic glimpse? Do we devote ourselves to breaking bread together? This is referring to sharing meals together where we sit and talk with each other. Or do we run through grab a plate and run out or maybe ignore this altogether. We have seemed to reach a point where we as a culture, and maybe as a church, where we have become un-teachable. It's as if we believe our own press clippings. Is it we believe we already do all that is asked of us? It's as if we believe as the GPS says “You have arrived?” It seems we believe, as actions show that we know all the answers and as such refuse to listen and learn because we already know. I look around during meetings and/or worship for the conference, the district, and even here and I see people looking off “somewhere over the rainbow.”

We not only refuse to receive wisdom but we've become indifferent or insensitive to wisdom as well. Our passage is clear in **verse 24** “*Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded.*” We seem to totally ignore wisdom and pay it no attention. Look around this week see how many people you see wearing ear phones, ear plugs, looking down and texting and totally ignoring those around them.

These people have isolated themselves off from the world. They have cut themselves off from those around them.

But even if we don't walk around with our iPhones, iPods, iPads, or I what-ers we tend to totally ignore those around us. Many of us walk through this life oblivious to those around us. But I have to say we, the church, have its moments. I remember once when a community used wisdom and joined together, that community came together and if only for a couple of days there was one church in the community. But isn't sad it took someone having cancer for the people of a community to come together. Isn't it sad most of us would have little to nothing to do with many of those we call friends if it weren't for a special need? Why can't we be like this every day?

God speaks to us through His word, but if we never read it, if we never hear it. God speaks to us every day through those we come in contact with, but if we tune everyone around us out and focus only on ourselves; again we don't hear ... we can't hear, and we miss out on the wisdom.

We have become like the child called in to dinner and he does not want to come in because he wants to stay outside and play. But he is made to come in wash up and sit at the table. He finally comes in, and he washes up

but when he arrives at the table he refuses to sit down; mainly because he doesn't want too. Finally his father comes over to him as he stands there with his arms folded in defiance and he picks him up and sits him in his chair. To which the young lad cry's out, "I may be sitting down on the outside but I'm standing up on the inside."

Wisdom says to us in **verse 29-31**, "*Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.*" Hear that? Because we chose not to fear the Lord and His counsel we will be left to our own devices. How's this working out for us today? Look at what's happening around the world; look what's happening today with the falling away. This is not the only time when Scripture says this to us. In **Romans 1:18-19** "*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.*" God had revealed Himself and we have consistently refused Him seeking our own desires.

It doesn't get any better in **Romans 1:20-23**

“So they are without excuse; for 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 senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images.” We are without excuses for rejecting God and His instructions. We have no one to blame but ourselves and Paul finishes with the coup de gras

Romans 1:24-25*“Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!”*

We will be turned over to our own devices. This world in which we live and sit idly by and allow things to happen without ever lifting a finger and/or a thought to stop we will reap the benefits. Our passage closes with **verse 32** *“The simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them.”*

“Road Closed” the signs are out there but if we continue to be self-absorbed and ignore them we are destined for trouble. God is reaching out to us. He’s reaching out to you. It’s time to put down our iPhones, it’s time to shut off our iPod’s, and iPads and it’s time to unplug, look up and focus on the world in which we live. It’s time to listen for and to God’s wisdom as He speaks to us through the people around us; through situations; through His creation. God is speaking to each of us this morning, the question is, are we, are you listening. Are you listening or have you closed that road?