

Homily for the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time at Manor Methodist Church

Sermon Title: Choosing How We Shall Live: The Call to Embrace Wisdom

Date: September 15, 2024

Location: Manor Methodist Church, Galleywall Road, London SE16 3PB

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Introduction



Beloved community, as we gather this morning, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment in our spiritual journey. Last week, we explored the theme of “choosing how we shall live,” and today we are invited to reflect on the nature of wisdom—the kind of wisdom that challenges us, confronts us, and ultimately guides us in making those choices. As we delve into the words of Proverbs, Psalm 19, James, and Mark, we will discover that the path of wisdom is not always the easiest one to walk, but it is the one that leads to true life.

The Voice of Lady Wisdom

In Proverbs 1:20-33, we encounter Lady Wisdom, who cries out boldly in the streets, urging us to heed her call: “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?” Wisdom speaks with a clarity that can be jarring, confronting us with the reality of our choices and the consequences they bear.

This is not merely a gentle nudge but a clarion call to wake up, pay attention, and choose wisely. Wisdom is not an abstract concept; it is a living force inviting us into a deeper relationship with God and ourselves. Lady Wisdom beckons us to take stock of our lives, prompting questions like: “What kind of life do I want to live? What choices will I make today that will shape my tomorrow?”

The Challenge of Choosing Wisely

Reflecting on our choices, we must recognize that wisdom often requires us to step outside our comfort zones. In James 3:1-12, we are reminded of the power of our words and the responsibility they carry: “Not many of you should become teachers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” The words we speak and the choices we make can either build up or tear down, heal or harm.

Daily, we face countless choices—some small, others monumental. Every decision shapes our character and relationships. The critical question is: Are we choosing wisely? Are we allowing Lady Wisdom to guide our interactions, commitments, and stewardship of the world around us?

The Cost of Discipleship

In Mark 8:27-38, Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” This question transcends identity; it encompasses discipleship and the choices we make in response to that identity. Peter declares Jesus as the Messiah, only to receive a stark reminder from Jesus about the cost of discipleship: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

Choosing how we shall live, in light of who Jesus is, demands that we align our lives with the Kingdom’s values. It requires us to embrace the uncomfortable truths that wisdom reveals and to act upon them, living lives of integrity, compassion, and justice—even when it is difficult.

Embracing the Journey of Wisdom

As we navigate this journey, let us not shy away from the discomfort that may arise. Lady Wisdom challenges us to grow. She invites us to engage in prayer, confess our shortcomings, and seek God’s guidance in our choices. This is a sacred space where we can acknowledge failures and recommit to righteousness.

In Psalm 19, we find affirmation of God’s law and the wisdom it imparts: “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.” As we immerse ourselves in God’s Word, we are equipped to make choices reflecting our faith and commitment to live according to God’s will.

Illustrative Story: The Tale of Two Builders

Once upon a time in a village nestled between rolling hills, there were two builders: Samuel and Eli. Both were skilled, known for constructing sturdy homes. One day, a wealthy merchant sought to build a grand house and approached both builders.

Samuel, eager to impress, took the job and envisioned a magnificent structure. Tempted by quick completion for a bonus, he cut corners, using inferior materials. “No one will notice,” he thought.

Eli, however, understood the importance of a strong foundation. He chose high-quality materials and took care in his work. Though it took longer, he was committed to doing it right.

As weeks passed, Samuel's house looked stunning, while Eli's appeared modest. But when a fierce storm hit the village, the outcome was stark. Samuel's grand house crumbled, while Eli's stood strong.

Humbled, Samuel approached Eli, realizing his mistake: "I chose poorly." Eli replied, "I listened to Lady Wisdom. True strength lies in the choices we make, not in appearances."

This story illustrates the importance of choosing wisely. Like Eli, we are called to embrace the wisdom guiding our decisions. The storms of life will come, and our commitment to truth and integrity will help us stand firm.

As we conclude, I invite you to consider the choices before you. What areas of your life is Lady Wisdom calling you to examine? Where might you embrace the discomfort of truth to choose wisely?

Let us commit to listening for her voice, engaging with the wisdom of scripture, and living in ways that reflect Christ's love and grace. May we choose to hold onto wisdom, walk the path of discipleship, and honor God while serving our neighbors.

Though the path may not always be easy, it leads to life—abundant, transformative life. Amen.