

Listening Is Important
Proverbs 1:20-33 (02/12/17)
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In 1980, Washington state resident Harry Truman was warned. He just wouldn't listen. For two months volcanic activity forewarned a coming eruption and everyone was told to evacuate. But Harry refused. He felt secure there in his lodge on Spirit Lake. He assured himself, "This area is heavily timbered, Spirit Lake is in between me and the mountain, and the mountain is a mile away, the mountain ain't gonna hurt me." Suddenly at 8:32 on May 18, 1980, Mt. St. Helens blew sky high, sending a plume of volcanic smoke and ash 15 miles into the sky and burying 83 year-old Harry Truman under 150 feet of volcanic debris. His body was never found. Harry didn't listen to the warnings. He heard them, but he didn't listen.

Listening is important, especially when it comes to listening to God and His Wisdom. God made us to listen to His counsel and obey it. Even before sin entered in the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam His counsel – "Eat anything you want around here. Just don't eat of that one tree over there." And of course, instead of listening to God, Adam and Eve listened to the wrong voice, the wrong counsel, and the rest is history. Question: To whom are you listening? Who has your ears? Out of all the voices crying out to you, one stands above all others in giving wisdom as you journey through this life. Listen and pay attention. Ignore this voice and you will suffer consequences. That's what our passage is about this morning.

In Proverbs 1:20 Solomon introduces us to Lady Wisdom. She is pure, beautiful, holy, attractive. She is your best friend, the true lover of your soul. Everything she says is pure truth and for your good. She is the mind of God revealed in the Scripture and proclaimed in this world. She is the Word of God for all people. She is not equal to Christ, but she is Christ's mind communicating to you. She will lead you to eternal life through the gospel of Christ (2 Timothy 3:15). Her message is crammed with counsel that will guide you and give you all you need to live for God's glory. Actually, the Hebrew word "Wisdom" is plural, indicating Wisdom in its highest excellence and character. She is the quintessence of godly counsel.

Her message is not a Joel Osteen message designed to tickle your ears. Oh, no. She isn't a pep talk to make you feel better about yourself or boost your self-esteem. No, her message has eternal consequences. She assures you there are only two ways in this world, her way to heaven or the other way that lead inevitably to death. Listen to her before the mountain blows sky high and you disappear into the pit of destruction. Listen to her urgings, warnings, and assurances.

Wisdom strongly urges you to listen to her – vv. 20-23

Proverbs 1:20-23 Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; 21 At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: 22 "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge? 23 "Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.

She is shouting and lifting her voice and crying out. Wisdom doesn't whisper or teach like a chemistry teacher giving the table of elements, as important as they are. No, she's passionate. She speaks with full lungs and a clear voice that rings out. She speaks loudly through all of God's creation and cries out in every man's conscience. She shouts and cries for your attention in the Word of God, in the Gospel, right out of your Bible.

She cries out from every faithful pulpit and preacher with clarity and passion, like John Knox waking up Scotland to God's Word in the 1500s. It is said that Knox's one voice in one hour put more life into the hearers than 500 trumpets blasting in their ears. He calmly expounded the word for half hour, but then when he came to application, one note taker said, "He made me so to quake and tremble, that I could not hold pen to write. Before he was finished he became so violent he seemed to ding the pulpit to blads, and fly out of it!"

Not only is Wisdom passionate and crying out, but she doesn't stay in some secluded place reserved for scholars and PhDs. God's Wisdom isn't just for theologians or the church. Church is where Wisdom fuels and empowers believers with truth, but it is not to stop there. Bryce rightly titled our Proverbs series, "Wisdom Out in the Open!" Wisdom cries out there where people live, the public places, the streets, the crowds in the marketplace, even at the gates where all the political and judicial matters take place. God's wisdom and truth is for your private life, your home, your car, your workplace, your shopping area, your entertainment. Wisdom cries out for every part of your life. There's no separation between the sacred and the secular with God and His Wisdom! God's Wisdom deals with eternal matters and earthly matters, with relationships, marriage and divorce, gender issues, the sanctity of life, justice, how you conduct your business, your work ethic, illegal immigration, suffering, evil, persecution, science and origins – every area (from the book, *Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong*). But here's the problem. How many are hearing? And more important, how many are actually listening? In Evansville? In these subdivisions around us this morning? How many right now are just crawling out of bed or jamming their toast, scrambling their eggs and frying their bacon on a lazy, godless Sunday morning? By far the majority are totally oblivious to the powerful Word of God and their accountability to Him!

Wisdom calls out in verse 22, "How long?" Like a father pleading with a wayward son or a mother whose heart is reaching out to her daughter, Lady Wisdom pleads to all, to all of us simpletons, fools, scoffers. There was a time I scoffed, ridiculed, and used the Lord's name in vain. Then Wisdom called out to me through a local pastor and God changed my heart and turned me to hear His Word. How long has Wisdom called to you? You've lived long enough in God's world, breathing God's air, drinking God's water, eating God's daily bread. Wisdom asks, "How long will you refuse to listen to Me?"

Wisdom doesn't sugar coat her description of sinners. She lists five fools of Proverbs right here.

She calls out to the easily enticed naïve fools - the "peti," who has no firm commitments. He's gullible, easily led, easily seduced. He'll get lured by the flattering female in Proverbs 7.

She calls out to the scoffing, unteachable fools – the "letz," who love to make fun of God and anything sacred and thinks he is really smart in his ridiculing God's truth.

She calls out to the unconcerned, fatheaded fools – "kesil," who know the truth but hate what they know because it restrains their pleasures.

There are two other words for fools in Proverbs: the undisciplined "ewil" fool of Proverbs 12:15 and the "nabal," the fool who won't receive sensible talk. He's Nabal, Abigail's husband; nobody could tell him anything!

These fools don't think they are fools; they believe they are the smartest people on earth. They have every reason, argument, excuse, and answer to hide behind. They don't know how foolish they are and Wisdom works hard here to break through their thick skulls and hard hearts to get them to listen!

But notice in verse 23 how gracious Wisdom is. She welcomes, invites, and implores. She urges the fool to respond, to turn. It's not too late. Turn to Wisdom today. Turn is the Old Testament word for repent. You're going down that wrong road and you hear Wisdom's plea. "Turn to Me and I promise you I will fill your heart and life with precious truth that will transform your life! If only you will turn and receive Me, I will pour my truth and My Spirit into your life and you will know Me and My joy, my forgiveness, my power, my sweetness for your soul. You will long to know Me more." But you must turn. And turn now, today! Tomorrow is a deadly delay. How many fools clung to tomorrow and died in their today! Today is the day of salvation, and the door is still open.

And so this beautiful, winsome Lady Wisdom graciously cries out and urges you to listen to her, to submit to her authority and receive her counsel! But now she warns....

Second, Wisdom strongly warns you not to reject her – vv. 24-31

Proverbs 1:24-31 "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; 25 And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; 26 I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, 27 When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. 28 "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me, 29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD. 30 "They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. 31 "So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices.

Life is full of warnings. Don't drink the kerosene. Don't eat the insulation. Don't use your hand to stop the chainsaw blade. Stay away from the edge. Taking warnings lightly can have horrible consequences. Last summer 38 year-old Yelp employee Colleen Burnsfell dropped 400 feet to her death for getting too close to the edge of the Grand Canyon. That red light flashing on your dash may be important.

Now Wisdom sends out strong warnings, bright flashing red lights into your soul. She's calling and even stretching out her hand to you. Stop and think of this. God is so personal as he stretches out His hand to you to give you what you desperately need. Are you accepting or are you foolishly rejecting? God stretches out His hand to you every day – providing everything you need to live – your health, your heart, your mind, your parents or spouse or friends or job. God is graciously lovingly stretching out His hand to you, calling you to turn to Him.

Verses 24-25 tell of people who rejected Wisdom. Nothing is sadder than rejecting the mercy and kindness of God. Romans 2:4-5 says, "Do you think lightly of the riches of God's kindness, patience, not knowing that kindness of God is designed to lead you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God!" Wow! Ponder that a while.

Let's face Wisdom's warnings here in verses 26-27. If you continue to reject God's call on your life and continue in your naïve, foolish, God-ignoring ways, you will pay a hefty price now and for eternity. Are you rejecting the one thing you need most? Are you refusing to bow your knee to God's authority and God's goodness in His Word? Are you turning away from God's counsel that will not only take you to heaven when you die but give you the answers to the struggles and sins and depressions of this life?

Wisdom laughs, but not in the sense of finding some sadistic pleasure in your damnation. She is trying to shock you into seeing how insane it is to go through this life rejecting God's Wisdom, and then die in your sin. Rejecting God's Wisdom will cause calamity, dread, distress, and anguish in your life sooner or later. Like the fool who built his house on the sand in Matthew 7, the storms, the tornadoes, the rain, and the wind beat against his house and it collapsed and great was its fall! That's exactly what's happening here, and it's all so unnecessary! Wisdom has cried out and shouted to you and chased you down streets and into corners. All you have to do is turn, humble yourself, bend your knee, submit to Christ, and receive his forgiveness and eternal life. Will you? The fool will not. How absurd. That's what the laughing and mocking is about.

If all this isn't bad enough, you will find the saddest reality of all in verses 28-31. There is not a more tragic passage in all of Scripture. All that time Wisdom was pursuing this person, they mocked and spit and totally rejected. But now the trouble has hit and they want Wisdom to pull them out, but she's not around. She's silent. Silent. They'll look for her, but she's not there. They've been left completely alone! They hardened their neck too long, and now they are broken beyond remedy, Proverbs 29:1, "A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed, without remedy." They went over the edge. They waited too long, scoffed and mocked too much. The ice in their heart grew so thick there is no breaking it now. To be forsaken by God, forever, is an unbearable thought. That's just the thing about hell as Jonathan Edwards put it, "Hell is unbearable, and yet rebels will have to bear it!"

Is there hope? Yes, as long as you are breathing. But don't take your life for granted. You may fly out into eternity this afternoon and stand before Christ. You don't want to hear Him say, "Depart from Me I never knew you." Know that grace has its limits. This message must not be softened down to misrepresent God

or speak falsely to your soul. Wisdom says, "They lived without Me; they'll die without me." And in this awful place there is no kindness, no grace, no mercy, only punishment, and not for a short while, but, beyond comprehension, forever and ever.

Verse 31 says these rejecters will eat the fruit of their own way and be choked by their own schemes. Rebellion and rejection of God choke, destroy, and kill. Now they must pay. They made their bed; now they must sleep in it. All those schemes to live without God, going their own way, ignoring God, maybe even joking about God or mocking the things of God will end up choking them.

Third, Wisdom plainly lays out two choices for every single human being – vss. 32-33

Proverbs 1:32-33 "For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them. 33 "But he who listens to me shall live securely And will be at ease from the dread of evil."

Choice #1 – Death and destruction (vs 32). The naïve fool never figured it out. He never feared the Lord. He never took God seriously. He just never felt the necessity to repent. At the most he thought, "Maybe tomorrow." He went his own way, right into his eternal death. He slept in his complacency. He is like that wealthy farmer in Luke 12. His land was so productive he built bigger and bigger barns to store all his crops and things. He then planned to take his ease, settle back and enjoy life, only to hear that fateful night, "You fool, this night your soul is required of you!"

Choice #2 – Security and freedom from condemnation (vs 33). Harry Truman was buried in the ashes of Mt. St. Helens because he refused to listen and take action. These people in vs. 32 chose to listen to Wisdom. They opened their hearts to God's truth, confessed their sin, turned to Christ and received eternal life! Forever and ever they will know peace with God and the security that only Christ can provide for His people.

Harry Ironside was a popular preacher in the early 1900s and was the pastor of Moody Church for a time. He was raised by a godly mother who had lots of preachers come to the house. These preachers challenged young Harry about his soul, "Are you born again, Harry?" His mother prayed for him and exposed him to God's Word.

This Proverbs passage was special to Harry. "The words of [Proverbs 1:32-33](#) will always possess a tender and precious interest for me. It was through having learned them as a lad in the Sunday school that I was, when fourteen years of age, truly awakened by the Spirit of God to see the awful result of rejecting the call of the gospel." He was at a party and suddenly God dealt with his soul using this passage. He left the party, ran home, and found a quiet place. "Unable to shake off the vivid impression of God's righteous wrath if I continued to refuse His grace, I fell down before Him confessing myself a lost, undone sinner. I found in [John 3:16](#) the solace my conscience needed, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' It was a night to be remembered forever!"

What about you? Have you welcomed Lady Wisdom into your life? Have you listened to her cry to you and found in Christ the security and freedom from condemnation that only He can give you? When you face Christ, will He say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you" or "Today you will be with Me in paradise."?