

June 7, 2015

“Seek the Wisdom of God”

Homily by Rev. Patricia Farris



Proverbs 4:7-13

The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight. Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honour you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a fair garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown. Hear, my child, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many. I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. When you walk, your step will not be hampered; and if you run, you will not stumble. Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

This Sunday on which we award our scholarships is one of my most favorite days of the whole year here at Santa Monica First. It is thrilling to see the people whose lives are so tangibly and generously and lovingly impacted by the gifts of these scholarships. And how grateful and inspired we all are at the generosity and dedication of those who reach out to this generation of students and generations yet to come in support of education, profession and vocation. Thanks be to God! One of the values we Methodists pass down from generation to generation is the love of learning and the importance of education. From the beginning of the Methodist movement, we have supported schools and teachers, and we have built and maintained colleges, universities, and seminaries. We have insisted, and still do so to this day around the world, that boys AND girls have full access to all the benefits of the classroom. We have cherished and nurtured the life of the mind and taught that God is present in all there is to learn from science and history, from human psychology to engineering, to philosophy, to art and literature and music. We have taught that we are created to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and we have put institutions and dollars and human resources behind our convictions to make education available to all.

The scholarships this congregation provides is one way of putting those commitments into action.

Methodists value not only knowledge, but wisdom, the Wisdom of God. The learning we promote is not intended for the mind only, but for the heart and the soul. This is always at the heart of all our Children, Youth, and Family ministries. God's Wisdom gets at the question of not just what we need to know—but rather, how we are to live as people of God. In Proverbs, Wisdom is often described as the Way, meaning a path worn by constant use. A path frequently traveled. A way of living. It was from this understanding that the early Christians were known as the people of the Way, for this is what Jesus meant when he told us: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” This living way is the Wisdom of God. There are admonitions in the Book of Proverbs about life lived along this Way. “Do not rob the poor”, it tells us. Avoid gluttony, greed, lying, extravagance, arrogance and contention. Instead, Wisdom, the path of God's Way, directs us to live humbly, faithfully, obediently, reputably and securely.

It is through Wisdom that we are taught to pay attention to our relations with God and with one another, to seek harmony and right relationship with all. And it is through Wisdom that we attain what the Psalmist calls “the fear of the Lord”, awe of God, the gut awareness that God is the Lord of Life, the Creator of everything, the source of all goodness, beauty and truth, amazing grace.

“Listen my children, and be attentive, that you may gain insight. Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight.”

Students, scholarship recipients—may this same spirit be in your hearts now as you receive these gifts from those in this congregation who, without knowing you personally, have invested in your future and in the future of the church and of the world. No one can now foresee what new issues and crises you may be called to address, what gifts might be summoned from you to make this world a better place.

As you learn, as you grow, as your knowledge increases, may your love of God increase as well. May you live faithfully and passionately. May you use your knowledge and the privilege it affords to serve others, and may whatever privilege and status you attain through these pursuits enable you to give back more generously to those who are still in need. Go forward to make your mark on this world in your own unique way that honors God and benefits God's people. And always remain grateful to those who have walked this Way before, preparing the path and opening doors for you.

May God's full blessings be upon you as you pursue your studies and expand your minds. And never forget to seek the Wisdom of God.

Notes:

The Living Pulpit. “Wisdom.” July-September 2000.

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