



WEEKLY STUDY October 29-November 4, 2023

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

Wisdom to Live By

Our sermon series for October is: Wisdom to Live By: A Series on Wisdom Literature and Lived Experience. What wisdom does the Bible instill in us? What are the best pieces of advice we have been given about faith and life? This month we are going to both discover insight for our journey in Psalms, Proverbs, and Job – and hear the life experiences and learnings from our congregation members. As we read, listen, and reflect, we will gain wisdom to live by.

Our scripture this week is: Proverbs 91

"Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,

Nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

A thoughts and may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you.

You will only observed with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,' and you make the Most High your dwelling,

No harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;

Then will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

"Because he loves me,' says the Lord, "I will rescue him;

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call on me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble,

I will deliver him and honor him.

With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

- 1) Our series on Wisdom began the first Sunday in October with the reading of Psalm 1. Pastor Sam stated that this psalm is an invitation to receive wisdom and to begin sharing your insight on faith and life. She stated that it sets forth 2 paths: one is a posture of constant openness to God's instruction and the other is a posture of arrogantly rejecting God's instruction. On the second Sunday we explored, "Wisdom from Nature" and were reminded of the importance of all creation in reflecting God's presence. The third Sunday Marshall Brown was our lay speaker. Through his message, Marshall talked about his lifetime of experiences in seeking to follow God and to nurture his faith. He gave us a good example of how our individual experiences inform the decisions we make daily in response to God's love. Last week, with the theme "wisdom for the body" Rev. Sam called our attention to the words of Proverbs 4: "...guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep correct talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought for the paths of your feet....." We finish our series this week with Psalm 91 and the theme, "The Lord is our Refuge."

Question: Re-read Psalm 91. In what ways does the psalmist talk about God as a refuge? What images would you write into a psalm to indicate that God is your refuge?

- 2) This week Rita Maggert spoke at the 8:30 service. She talked about learning to ski and how fearful she was. She described visualizing Jesus with arms outspread to catch her if she fell. And she sang to herself "Turn your eyes upon Jesus" but because she couldn't quite remember the words, she made them up. With a vision and a song, she made it down the mountain. She then talked about another woman in the beginners class that never got the courage to get upright on her skis and she asked Rita what she had done to be able to master going down on skis rather than on her bottom. Rita told of how she didn't have courage to really tell the woman how she had relied of her faith in God. And she talked about that as a missed opportunity. The wisdom she shared with us was: 1) God puts people in our paths who are willing to listen to our message of faith; 2) (from a sermon of Sam's) God isn't finished with us yet – so if we miss an opportunity there are others coming; and 3) (from Mother Theresa) don't worry about what we need to say, God will guide us.

Question: When have you found yourself consumed with fear and called on God to help you? What did you do to gain courage? Have your had people put into your path who needed to hear how you have relied upon God in times of fear?

- 3) In the 10:30 service, Dick Page was our lay speaker. We heard much of his life story as he told how he felt his life had been shaped by God's plans – not by his (Dick's) plans. He stated in some ways he has felt he's lived a charmed life. He began his talk by quoting Lem Tanksley (who had been a lifelong member at BMUMC) who, when asked how he was doing, always replied, "Better than I deserve." And after recounting incidences in his own life, Dick came back to that question, "How are you doing?" Giving this response; "Thanks to God's plans, better than I deserve."

Question: In your life, where have you felt – through opportunities; through sadness; through friendships – that thanks to God’s plan you are better than you deserve?”

- 4) Pastor Sam started her sermon this week reflecting on a memory shared with her from one of our members, Carol Cartwright. This past week Carol’s sister, Pat, died. Carol shared with Pastor Sam how important her sister had been in her life and how she has really been her best friend. She told an early childhood memory. When Carol was 3 and Pat was five, their family had been to Detroit to see grandparents. On the drive home, Carol & Pat were both in the backseat of the car trying to rest and Carol couldn’t get comfortable. Pat had Carol lay her head in her lap and Pat watched over her baby sister as Carol rested. Sam said, “This has to be what it means to rest in the shadow of God, cradled and cared for under God’s wings.”

Question: Who in your life has provided this kind of care for you?

Prayer: (This week’s prayer is adapted from the prayer of Affirmation from Sunday’s service). God our shelter, be for us the roof above our heads and the solid foundation under our feet. God our refuge, be our safe place to land when we are constantly greeted by the harsh edges of life. God our dwelling place, be our sanctuary where we can find deep peace. God our home, be for us the place where we can grow, thrive, love and be loved. AMEN

Weekly Challenges: Sunday we had these new members join BMUMC: Alice & Daniel Newman and their sons Hank & Stan; Jeffrey Martin; Rick & Gretchen Thiel. Pray a prayer of thanks for these members in our family of faith. Daily ask, “To whom was I called to be a refuge; to provide strength and care this day?” Pray for whoever you name and thank God for God’s support of you in being a source of strength and care.

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)