

26 August 2012

Reading: Proverbs 3:1-10 (OT page 637)

Reflection

The text for the reflection is verse 1 & 2: “My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity.”

Proverbs is part of the so called Wisdom literature in the Old Testament. Unlike Job or Ecclesiastes, the author of Proverbs had a strong belief in what we would call “theology of progress”. If you serve and obey God, you will prosper in more than one way. You will be blessed with all kinds of blessings such as good health, a long life and prosperity. Prosperity in our text does not mean “materialistic wealth” but implies peace, completeness, content and or safety.

The authors of Job and Ecclesiastes disagreed and wanted to prove that bad things happen to all people – either good or bad. No-one is spared. Everything comes from the Lord - the good and the bad. But all of them agreed that true wisdom is to serve God and follow his commandments irrespective of any rewards.

In our reading the teacher says to his pupils that if they commit their lives totally to God they will find happiness, peace and stability. They must always trust God in everything they do. They must bind this knowledge around their neck meaning they must never leave it. In those days all men had a special signet ring which they carried around their necks on a leather necklace. A signet ring was like our modern day identity cards or passports. It determined and established your identity. If you lost it, you were indeed in trouble. So if the Wisdom teacher says to hang it around their necks he can assume this practise or simply mean it must always be part of their lives.

They must hold on to God and not rely on their own wisdom. They must honour Him by giving Him the best they own. He must remain the most important in their lives...

I think this is indeed very true words. I think it is safe to say that all of us this morning will agree that we need God. Why? Well we know ourselves and we know what other humans are like. We have learnt to trust only on God. We know that He is the only One who has power over the heavens and the earth. He is the One that is in control of humanity and this earth. He controls everything. But since this passage in Proverbs was written, we have seen another side of God. He is a God

of mercy, love and justice. We have come to know that God knew that no human will ever have true salvation and peace. He then send his only Son Jesus Christ to this earth to take all the sins of his people upon his shoulders and overpowered death so that everyone that believes in Him will not die but enter into all eternity with Him. And when He ascended to heaven He gave us His Holy Spirit to help us to have faith, hope and love - to know that through His Holy Spirit He is always present.

And so in a way we are always reminded of His grace and compassion through the signs of baptism and Communion. Every time a child is baptised, we remember His grace and mercy. Every time we touch our foreheads where we have received the water of baptism, we are reminded of His eternal love.

We also have choices to make – we can either hold on to God and journey in the faith that nothing can separate us from His love or leave His hand. We must also know that our choice will have consequences. If we do not take the hand of God, we will experience that we do not really feel happy and at peace as though something is missing in our lives, that a sense of meaning and direction is lacking. If we journey with God, we will experience a peace that is beyond all human

understanding. We will have hope in times of struggle and tribulation to look beyond the things of this world that upsets us to His eternal kingdom. Our lives will have meaning and direction because we will have an anchor that anchor us even in the most fierce life storm.

So let us all think again and renew our faith in God, knowing that true wisdom is indeed found in serving, trusting and obeying Him. It is not very wise not to believe in God, our Creator, Heavenly Father and redeemer of our sins.

And to believe in God, to believe in His eternal Kingdom means a life of following as instructed by the Wisdom teacher in our reading. Our lives must tell each and every person we meet that we serve God, the Maker of all life. Our attitudes must convey that we do not trust our own ideas more than God and the way we give must reflect that everything we own belongs to God. Our lives must reflect our faith in the salvation, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Our lives must reflect the living hope that we carry with us.

I once heard someone says that they can surely believe in God just by looking at a life of a believer like Mother Theresa or dr Martin Luther King.

May our lives tell our stories of faith, hope and love and may our stories be real – full of the ups and downs we face each day, full of the doubts we have, full of the tears we cry, full of the anguish we sometimes have when we feel that God is not fair, full of the joys that we encounter and experience, and full of all our struggles, hurt, brokenness, bereavement and tribulations. Our stories will only have meaning when we are realistic, truthful and depending on God. May each one go out today and touch a life that is not part of the communion of believers with our faith hope and love.

Amen