Wisdom Writing Proverbs 1:20-33

Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice.

At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

²² 'How long,
O simple ones,
will you love being simple?
How long
will scoffers
delight in their scoffing
and fools
hate knowledge?

²³ Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you.

> ²⁴ Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,

²⁵ and because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof,

I also will laugh at your calamity;I will mock when panic strikes you,

²⁷ when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

²⁸ Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.

²⁹ Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD,

would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof,

31 therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.

For waywardness kills the simple,
 and the complacency of fools destroys them;
 but those who listen to me will be secure
 and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.'

Epistle James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

²For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.

³If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies.

⁴Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.

> ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

⁶And the tongue is a fire.

The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell.

⁷For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species,

⁸but no one can tame the tongue a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God.

¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.

My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.

¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water?

12Can a fig tree,
my brothers and sisters,
yield olives,
or a grapevine
figs?
No more can salt water
yield fresh.

Gospel Mark 8:27-38

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?'

²⁸And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.'

²⁹He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?'

> Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.'

³⁰And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

³²He said all this quite openly.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan!

For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them,
'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

38Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Reading Wisdom this Week

The RCL backs up in this 2nd week to introduce Proverbs if Proverbs is a collection from wide sources, with c1-10 intro, this personification or hypostasizing of Wisdom, revisited and developed in Proverbs 8 and 9, is an editorial or interpretive key

There are great interpretive traditions
about this feminine face of God
the divine voice calling out in the market,
and I'll look forward to the UCC echoes among us
of first and second wave feminist biblical scholarship

I won't repeat from 3 years ago:

http://www.billbrucewords.com/2021/09/creation-time-wisdom-1.html

When Proverbs 8 comes up on Trinity Sunday, it's similar: http://www.billbrucewords.com/2016/05/who-has-seen-wind.html

Back in 2003, the lectionary used Proverbs 9 this week: http://www.billbrucewords.com/2003/09/choosing-wisely.html

How does language work, to inform and express experience? It's not stupid or naïve to 're-enchant' our world with Gadamer Is 'Dame Wisdom' a metaphor, analogy, Frye's 'metonymy', Taylor's 'social imaginary'

The current RCL revision places Proverbs 1 in Creation season How will we proclaim it in an ecological oikumene, Sensitive to our UCC's functional Unitarianism?

Reading the Epistle this Week

The RCL plants this text early in the fall,
Which used to be 'back to church and Sunday School' season
But now is more likely 'Creation Season'

The climate crisis is not a natural evolution,
But an 'Anthropocene' age precipitated by human choices
Driven, steered, in this metaphor, by tongues

The literary figures here are 'like' metaphors
Inviting elaboration into allegory or parable stories
Hopefully few of us tempted to self-mutilation
(with Abelard or other elective mutes or eunuchs)

For preachers, 'teaching elders' in our tradition,
What are the risks named here,
Of misleading the rest of the body?

I hold to the 'displacement theory' of ordered ministry:

I am chosen begrudgingly, as less bad than the alternative,

By ruling elders who discern needs in context,

And already know they can't get what they want!

In 2012, a valedictory note:

http://www.billbrucewords.com/2012/09/teachers-notes-from-www.html

In 2018, naming some of my teachers:

http://www.billbrucewords.com/2018/09/not-many-should-be-teachers.html

Reading the Gospel this Week

We've reached Peter's confession,
Turning the second half of Mark's gospel
Placed before Transfiguration

Who do 'people' say about Jesus?
Who do 'you' say Jesus is?
It's another routine 'Renewing Members' day
The 1988 UCC mandate to 'regular and frequent' confirmation

In 2006, it was 'Jesus the Terrorist' for me 5 years post 9-11: http://www.billbrucewords.com/2006/09/jesus-terrorist-jas3-mark8.html

Even if we share Peter's confession – We can fail, with Peter, to recognize the consequences

How have we proclaimed Peter's confession and Jesus' rebuke from Mark's version, compared to Matthew 16?

In 2018, it was 'Growth Plans' in Lent for an ACM: http://www.billbrucewords.com/2018/02/growth-plans.html

How does it change, when heard in Creation Season?
What if 'losing our life' were applied
to the church corporate,
not just us individual members?

What does being 'ashamed' of Jesus and gospel mean Or 'Son of Man' being ashamed in turn? What's eirenic – or cravenly self-serving? What's militant – or violently imperial?