

**Wisdom Writing**  
***Proverbs 1:20-33***

<sup>20</sup> Wisdom cries out  
in the street;  
in the squares  
she raises her voice.

<sup>21</sup> At the busiest corner  
she cries out;  
at the entrance of the city gates  
she speaks:

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

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

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

<sup>25</sup> and because  
you have ignored  
all my counsel  
and would have  
none of my reproof,

<sup>26</sup> I also will laugh at your calamity;  
I will mock when panic strikes you,

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

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

<sup>29</sup> Because they hated knowledge  
and did not choose the fear of the LORD,

<sup>30</sup> would have none of my counsel,  
and despised all my reproof,

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

<sup>32</sup> For waywardness kills the simple,  
and the complacency of fools destroys them;  
<sup>33</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup>For 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.

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

<sup>4</sup>Or 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.

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

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

<sup>6</sup>And 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.

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

<sup>8</sup>but no one can tame the tongue—  
a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

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

<sup>10</sup>From the same mouth  
come blessing and cursing.

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

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

<sup>12</sup>Can 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?'

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

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

Peter answered him,  
'You are the Messiah.'

30 And 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.

32 He said all this  
quite openly.

And Peter took him aside  
and began to rebuke him.

33 But 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.

35 For 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.

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

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

38 Those 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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?