Wisdom
Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
and favour is better than silver or gold.
2 The rich and the poor have this in common:
the Lord is the maker of them all.

3 The clever see danger and hide;
but the simple go on, and suffer for it.
4 The reward for humility and fear of the Lord
is riches and honour and life.
5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse;
the cautious will keep far from them.
6 Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray.
7 The rich rules over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of the lender.

8 Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,
and the rod of anger will fail.
9 Those who are generous are blessed,
for they share their bread with the poor.

10 Drive out a scoffer, and strife goes out;
quarrelling and abuse will cease.
11 Those who love a pure heart and are gracious in speech
will have the king as a friend.
12 The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge,
but he overthrows the words of the faithless.
13 The lazy person says, 'There is a lion outside!
I shall be killed in the streets!'
14 The mouth of a loose woman is a deep pit;
he with whom the Lord is angry falls into it.
15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a boy,
but the rod of discipline drives it far away.
16 Oppressing the poor in order to enrich oneself,
and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss.

17 The words of the wise:

Incline your ear and hear my words,
and apply your mind to my teaching;
18 for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,
if all of them are ready on your lips.
19 So that your trust may be in the Lord,
I have made them known to you today—yes, to you.
20 Have I not written for you thirty sayings
of admonition and knowledge,
21 to show you what is right and true,
so that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?

22 Do not rob the poor because they are poor,
or crush the afflicted at the gate;
23 for the Lord pleads their cause
and despoils of life those who despoil them.

24 Make no friends with those given to anger,
and do not associate with hotheads,
25 or you may learn their ways
and entangle yourself in a snare.
26 Do not be one of those who give pledges,
who become surety for debts.
27 If you have nothing with which to pay,
why should your bed be taken from under you?
28 Do not remove the ancient landmark
that your ancestors set up.
29 Do you see those who are skilful in their work?
They will serve kings;
they will not serve common people.

Epistle
James 2:1-17

My brothers and sisters,
do you
with your acts of favouritism
really believe
in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?

2 For if a person
with gold rings and in fine clothes
comes into your assembly,
and if a poor person
in dirty clothes
also comes in,

3 and if you take notice
of the one wearing the fine clothes
and say,
'Have a seat here, please',
while to the one who is poor
you say,
'Stand there', or,
'Sit at my feet',

4 have you not made distinctions
among yourselves,
and become judges
with evil thoughts?

5 Listen,
my beloved brothers and sisters.

Has not God chosen the poor in the world
to be rich in faith
and to be heirs of the kingdom
that he has promised to those who love him?

6 But you have dishonoured the poor.

Is it not the rich who oppress you?
Is it not they who drag you into court?

7 Is it not they who blaspheme
the excellent name
that was invoked over you?

8 You do well
if you really fulfil the royal law
according to the scripture,
'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

9 But if you show partiality,
you commit sin
and are convicted by the law
as transgressors.

10 For whoever keeps the whole law
but fails in one point
has become accountable for all of it.

11 For the one who said,
'You shall not commit adultery',
also said,
'You shall not murder.'

Now if
you do not commit adultery
but if
you murder,
you have become
a transgressor
of the law.

[12]So speak and so act
as those who are to be judged
by the law of liberty.

[13]For judgement
will be without mercy
to anyone
who has shown no mercy;

mercy triumphs
over judgement.

[14] What good is it,
my brothers and sisters,
if you say you have faith
but do not have works?

Can faith save you?

[15]If a brother or sister
is naked
and lacks daily food,
[16]and one of you says to them,
'Go in peace;
keep warm
and eat your fill',

and yet
you do not supply
their bodily needs,
what is the good of that?

[17]So faith by itself,
if it has no works,
is dead.

Gospel
Mark 7:24-37

24 From there he set out
and went away
to the region of Tyre.

He entered a house
and did not want anyone to know
he was there.

Yet he could not escape notice,
[25]but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit
immediately heard about him,
and she came and bowed down at his feet.

[26]Now the woman was a Gentile,
of Syrophoenician origin.

She begged him
to cast the demon out
of her daughter.

[27]He said to her,
'Let the children be fed first,
for it is not fair to take the children's food
and throw it to the dogs.'

[28]But she answered him,
'Sir, even the dogs under the table
eat the children's crumbs.'

[29]Then he said to her,
'For saying that,
you may go—
the demon has left your daughter.'

30 So she went home,
found the child lying on the bed,
and the demon gone.

31 Then he returned
from the region of Tyre,
and went by way of Sidon
towards the Sea of Galilee,
in the region of the Decapolis.

32 They brought to him a deaf man
who had an impediment in his speech;
and they begged him to lay his hand on him.

33 He took him aside in private,
away from the crowd,
and put his fingers into his ears,
and he spat and touched his tongue.

34 Then looking up to heaven,
he sighed and said to him,
'*Ephphatha'*, that is, 'Be opened.'

35 And immediately
his ears were opened,
his tongue was released,
and he spoke plainly.

36 Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one;
but the more he ordered them,
the more zealously they proclaimed it.

37 They were astounded beyond measure,
saying,
'He has done everything well;
he even makes the deaf to hear
and the mute to speak.'

Reading Wisdom this Week

The RCL samples Proverbs for 3 Sundays
Another book attributed to Solomon –
This week, selections from c22

Canadian R.B.Y.Scott splits this chapter,
22:1-16 ending a collection from c.20
22:17ff paralleling *Amen-em-ope*
"The Thirty Precepts of the Sages"
based on that earlier Egyptian instruction

The Ancient Near Eastern parallels or sources
from Mesopotamian and Egyptian empires
reflect cosmopolitan sophistication,
adapting instruction for courtiers,
not simply common sense grass roots culture

My subtitle for Proverbs, as for all Ketuvim:
Has long been 'From Mom to MBA'
The curriculum to equip our kids for our world,
A mix of 'what we teach grandchildren',
And professional tricks for courtiers

We won't likely read this in worship this week –
The lection is 3 proverbs, each a pair of lines,
And I find the cherry-picking tendentious –
Inviting us instead to read and talk about their context

Who do you picture teaching and learning all this
For what purposes in contexts ancient or modern?
What axes are being ground by the revised lectionary,
Still diverging from the Roman Catholic one?

Reading the Epistle this Week

The RCL continues with James, a 2nd week of 5
Synchronized with neighbours' Roman Catholic missals

Whom do we greet and receive and how,
our communities of faith revealing in action our implicit bias?

In churches marked by narrow demographics
despite our diction of inclusiveness, this makes us wince

in 2006, I preached it as 'Jesus the Bigot'
http://www.billbrucewords.com/2006/10/jesus-bigot-jas2-mark7.html

In 2009, I shifted to 'Faith & Works'
http://www.billbrucewords.com/2009/09/faith-works.html

By 2015, it was 'Parochial Bias'
http://www.billbrucewords.com/2015/09/parochial-bias.html

Around Annan, I just used James 2 as pretext for Janet Gear:
http://www.billbrucewords.com/2022/10/help-and-mend.html

I recognize that in worship, I duck c2:8-13
I recall bible study groups talking about being 'law-abiding',
And our hypocrisy toward those with criminal records
(or even those caught up in litigation, including family law)

So how will we hear it and amplify it,
In our context of 2024 Grey County?

Reading the Gospel this Week

Don't skip over the proper nouns,
the geography and ethnography matters –
Jesus swings northwest, then northeast
From his Galilean successes - who's "us"?

'Tyre' resonates with Hebrew scripture allusions
and 'Syrophoenician' is racialized ethnic code, only in Mark
the 'othered' woman's child, echo of the c5 child and woman

'Decapolis' is a Roman project of imperial urban renewal
even if we're relocated in Galilee for the deaf mute's healing:
what can't we hear or speak, in changing contexts?

This is my old 'Jesus is a Racist', 'Jesus the Bigot' rut
the 'scandal of particularity' of a Palestinian man, 1st C CE
a starting, not ending point of incarnation

I tried that at Annan in 2021:
http://www.billbrucewords.com/2021/09/jesus-bigot.html

Back in 2003, I was fresh back from Australia:
http://www.billbrucewords.com/2003/09/widening-our-circles-of-care.html

in 2012, it was baptizing a baby in suburbia:
http://www.billbrucewords.com/2012/09/hearing-voices-finding-voices-notes.html

So, again, how will it resonate this tie,
In our context of 2024 Grey County?