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## Daily Meditations

### June 8-13, 2020

The Biblical readings are taken from the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer for Year 2 and written by the St. Stephen's Meditation Writing Team: Dave Boyd, Becky Denton, Pat Gillory, Traci Maxwell, Jay Nickel, Bob Reed, T.Cay Rowe, and Carroll Wilson.

Click on the scripture reading for each day to go directly to link.

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### COLLECT, PROPER 3

*Grant, O Lord, that the course of this world may be peaceably governed by your providence; and that your Church may joyfully serve you in confidence and serenity; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

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### Pithy Proverbs

Monday, June 8, 2020

#### **Proverbs 10:1-12**

*"Hatred stirs up disputes, but love covers all offenses."*

I will admit that up until I was given this set of verses to write meditations about, I had never read a single word of the book of Proverbs. It's not that I'm a slacker, but I grew up and have belonged to religious groups that focus more on the New Testament than anything in the Old. I'm probably most familiar with Genesis, of course, and the book of Job, because I had to do a major paper involving Job in graduate school. I know the Decalogue. So, I know just enough to get by when it comes to citing Old Testament materials. Now, I am so sorry that I never read Proverbs. What a marvelous group of pithy observations here in Chapter 10, the start of the First Collection of the Proverbs of Solomon. (Now I know, too, why he is referred to most often as a wise man. Wise man, indeed!) Perhaps this lack of knowledge allows me the opportunity to see these proverbs with new eyes (or perhaps not), and thus perhaps I can offer something compelling to those of you who have Proverbs down pat. Of these first 12, it's the last six or seven that truly caught my attention because of the times in which we live. Bear with me, because I'm going to reprint the verses that I'm referring to here:

**Verse 6:** *Blessings are for the head of the just, but a rod for the back of the fool.*

**Verse 7:** *The memory of the just will be blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.*

**Verse 8:** *A wise man heeds commands, but a prating fool will be overthrown.*

**Verse 9:** *He who walks honestly walks securely, but he whose ways are crooked will fare badly.*

**Verse 10:** *He who winks at fault causes trouble, but he who frankly reproveth promotes peace.*

**Verse 11:** *A fountain of life is the mouth of the just, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.*

And I will end with Verse 12: *Hatred stirs up disputes, but love covers all offenses.* I have reproduced Verses 6-11 because they seem to encapsulate what is wrong with some of the leaders of the United States in these times of turbulence. I reprint Verse 12 because I must constantly remind myself not to despise, not to hate, not to revolt. It's written elsewhere that the apostles of Jesus often referred to Verse 12, and, of course, Jesus embodied it altogether. I have to walk the walk, as they say, or as Fr. Phil would say: Be Jesus.

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## Thinking About Thinking

*Tuesday, June 9, 2020*

### Proverbs 15:16-23

*The quick-tempered man makes a fool of himself, but the prudent man is at peace.*

On each of the verses in this section of Proverbs, I could probably write a good editorial (yeah, I was a journalist). But of all of these few, this one tells me what I need to repeat every morning before my feet hit the floor. More than 45 years of writing editorials and editorial-page or op-ed columns, it's likely I took too many people or groups to task before I should have. I remember one column I wrote that I was very proud of, and I asked some friends what they thought about it.

"Sounds too much like you're shooting from the hip," one of them said.

At the time, I was a little miffed, but he started me thinking about **thinking**. Since then I have tried to be better, but like Paul, the things I wish I would not do, I do, and the things I wish I had done, I didn't or don't. Anyone who follows me on Facebook knows what I'm talking about. I take solace in the fact that I can retreat behind the idea that I'm only human and humans do err, but I need to work on this. I want to be a prudent man. Alas, time is running out. Every day is a new day, though, right?

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## They Knew Better

*Wednesday, June 10, 2020*

### Proverbs 17:1-20

*A single reprimand does more for a man of intelligence than a 100 lashes for a fool."*

Well, maybe. Does it follow, then, that if a man is reprimanded and goes forth to sin, no more he is intelligent? And doesn't it also mean that if a man is reprimanded and still continues to sin or waver off the road of the true and honest, he is a fool? I think so. Our prisons are full of many men and women who were raised up by good parents, taught in good schools by good teachers and who were undoubtedly introduced even before kindergarten to the right way to treat people and the wrong way to treat people. They knew better. Unquestionably, they were reprimanded, perhaps many times, for doing the same or similar disreputable deeds over and over again. How foolish of them to ignore what's valuable and ethical and moral.

Over the course of 45 years as a journalist, I saw people come to court accused of scandalous and awful deeds, including murder, and almost by watching their body language I could tell the ones who were intelligent and would learn from a reprimand--a court sentence--and ones who would never learn, no matter the

penalty. I worry more today than ever about the fools who get by with any kind of wrong-doing and are never reprimanded at all, but might even be praised because they have pledged fealty to the rich and powerful. Solomon has much to say about that kind of person, and so do I. The rich and powerful can get away with illegal acts, such as standing in the middle of Park Avenue and shooting someone, because, in my opinion, our system does little to reprimand them. They are fools who get by, but fools nonetheless. Instead, we call them "entitled."

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## Is This the Way a Wilson Should Act?

*Thursday, June 11, 2020*

### **Proverbs 21:30-22:6**

*Train a boy in the way he should go, even when he is old, he will not swerve from it.*

This seems a perfect follow-up for the verses discussed here on Wednesday. It's the matter of what a boy and girl are taught early on that sticks with them as they age and encounter various barriers and temptations. It's how they are trained, as well. I did not grow up with parents who spanked me when I needed discipline, and I don't have much understanding for people who think that's an okay way to raise up children, and I certainly have no use for parents who think that's an okay way to raise up children, and I certainly have no use for parents who beat their children. Unfortunately, there is no training manual for parenthood that I'm aware of. When I was a young parent, my wife and I had Dr. Spock and his books on child-rearing (I'll never forget, as an aside, running to find our Dr. Spock book to try to figure out why our sweet little baby daughter was having green poop!).

As a child, I was trained with this idea that I must do the right thing uppermost in my mind, mainly because it was implanted there by my grandmother and my dad: Is this the way a Wilson should act? If Wilsons meaning my people all the way back to Scotland and Ireland wouldn't act that way, I was taught not to act that way, either. I would sully my family's good name. I still use that measure sometimes when confronted with some new challenge (they get fewer as one grows older, though). There can be significant differences between what's right and what's wrong, and I tried to instill or train into my son and daughters the same insights I had been taught or trained in: How do you test for whether something is right? How do you respond to temptation?

All I'm saying is that Solomon was certainly correct in this observation. As the tree is bent, so is the tree inclined. I think this means that parents, perhaps more today than ever, need a community of support, the kind offered through a school such as St. Stephen's Episcopal School and through the church. If we do nothing else as a church and school, we must set the example. Doing that is essential to "training."

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## Point to Adults Worth Emulating

*Friday, June 12, 2020*

### **Proverbs 23:19-21, 29-24:2**

*Be not emulous of evil men, and desire not to be with them; for their hearts plot violence, and their lips speak of foul play.*

Birds of a feather flock together, right? How long ago did that saying get buried away or thrown out of public discourse? Today, we have what I would call, for lack of a better way of saying it, "clumps" of evil men and women in this country. They have power. They have wealth. They are greedy. They are irresponsible. They are entitled. And they hate. I am of course thinking of Washington, but I am also thinking of so many on police forces around the country who seem to think nothing of killing black boys and men for nothing

other than being black.

I am also thinking about that term "emulous." There was a time when young boys were told to look up to police officers, to U.S. senators, to presidents. They were encouraged to read the biographies of the greats in government and sports and so on. Who shall our boys and girls emulate today? The Kardashians? The Minneapolis Police Department? The men in white sheets who stand before the state Capitol with AK-47s and AR-15s on their shoulders and revolvers on their hips? Shall they emulate a president, about whom the Washington Post reported recently: "As of April 3, Trump's 1,170th day in office, our database shows that he has made 18,000 false or misleading claims. That's an average of more than 15 claims a day, though since our last update 75 days ago, he's been averaging just over 23 claims a day. That's slightly higher than the 22 a day he recorded in 2019." It's our duty as Christian adults to find and point to other adults who are worth emulating, who set a good example, who are worthy of our trust and gift of power. Our track record right now is not very good.

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## Why and When do They Turn Bad?

*Saturday, June 13, 2020*

### **Proverbs 25:15-28**

*It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than in a roomy house with a quarrelsome woman.*

Ha! I'm not touching that one! Just thought I'd throw in a little humor. Instead, let's look at Verse 26: "Like a troubled fountain or a polluted spring is a just man who gives way before the wicked." We seem to be talking here about what it would take to turn a good man or woman toward evil. Darth Vader comes readily to mind. He offered Luke Skywalker anything he wanted--power, wealth, mastery of the universe--if only Luke would come to the Dark Side. Yoda, among others, reminded Luke of his honor, his duty, his place in the galaxy of the Good.

I have seen many men I thought were good who gave in because of the promise of wealth and glory and bodily pleasures. They sold out. Some got by with their treachery; others did not. What goes around does not always come around. What makes a cop go bad? What makes a senator accept a bribe? What compels a president to go to war? And what, then, is a Just person? The Stoics also come to mind. They valued Courage, Temperance, Justice, and Wisdom. Jesus, of course, comes to mind as well. But, so does Judas. Judas: Now, there's a guy I'd like to know more about. When did he turn bad? Why? I don't know, but I'm glad he's among the disciples so we can know an unjust man when we see one.

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