

## Just Peace Sunday's Sermon Spark

### *Just Peace = Justice & Peace*

September 15, 2024

**Text:** Proverbs 1:20-33

**Theme:** "Things that Make for Peace"

**Reflection by:** Rev. Dr. Sheila Harvey

**Basic Outline:** *Note: In Greek, the word for wisdom is **Sophia**, and she will be the personification for our Sermon Spark.*

### **I. WISDOM'S CALL FOR JUSTICE & PEACE**

#### **A. WISDOM SPEAKS BOLDLY (1:20-21)**

1. She cries aloud, calling upon all to listen
2. She cries in the noisy streets, at the center of the city

#### **B. WISDOM EMBODIES LOVE FOR ALL (1:22)**

1. Simple ones, who love simplicity; the morally naive, easily influenced by others
2. Scorners, who delight in their arrogance; the cynical and defiant, prone to ridicule others
3. Fools, who hate knowledge; those hardened to the point of hating that which is good, and shameless

#### **C. WISDOM STANDS READY TO FORGIVE (1:23)**

1. Turn at her rebuke; respond to her warning and repent
2. She will pour out her spirit on them, she will make known her words to them, to bring salvation to them

### **II. WISDOM WARNS OF A WORLD VOID OF HOPE**

#### **A. TO THOSE WHO DID NOT CHOOSE LOVE (1:24-25)**

1. Refused her outstretched hands of healing
2. Ignored her counsel, and refused to repent
3. Rejected her wisdom altogether

### **B. WHEN THERE IS NO PEACE (1:26-30)**

1. She will have no sympathy when sudden terror comes like a storm
2. Despite their cries for help, it will be too late
3. Because they hated knowledge when they had the opportunity
4. They did not choose to fear God (the beginning of wisdom)
5. They rejected her counsel and all other wisdom

### **C. THE FATE OF UNJUST CHOICES (1:31)**

1. They will eat the fruit of their way, without regard for wisdom
2. They will be full of their counsel, and too late to do good

## **III. WISDOM'S FINAL APPEAL FOR JUST PEACE**

### **A. DESTRUCTION COMES WITHOUT PEACEBUILDING (1:32)**

1. Their turning away from the wisdom God has to offer
2. Allowing their complacency regarding wisdom to destroy them

### **B. INWARD PEACE COMES WITH EQUAL JUSTICE (1:33)**

1. For those who are willing to listen to wisdom
2. For those whose fear of the Lord will enable them to fear no evil

### **Narrative Context:**

The book of Proverbs studies humanity and the moral condition that governs our lives. Today's Just Peace Sunday theme, "Things that make for peace" invites us to study and reflect on the world around us, to seek to recognize where peace may be breaking in. In scripture we see that the "things that make for peace" include loving our enemies, welcoming the outcasts, healing diseases, and illnesses, feeding the hungry, and the power of love to transform our lives and culture. In Chapter 8:22-31, Wisdom was present at Creation as God's helper, but her delights were the people. So, we learn, that this proverb brings Wisdom and understanding to humanity to live happily, peacefully, and justly together.

### **Conflicts at Play:**

It is important to note the conflicts at play, which are many and complex. There are threats and promises from Wisdom, like that of a town crier whose job it is to make announcements in the

streets and awaken a slumbering population with an urgent message to follow the ways of justice and peace or to suffer the undesirable consequences. In that, Wisdom is personified here calling people from their foolish ways of being morally naïve and easily influenced by others. As Wisdom is not dwelling in some ivory tower. She speaks through the very stones of the street. For every person who has ears to hear, every street corner is vocal with evidence that foolishness produces death, and Wisdom yields life.

### **Way of Just Peace:**

In her crying out, Wisdom uses every device to awaken people from their slumber and unjust ways. She threatens. She laughs. She warns. Every incentive is appealed to, but in this passage there is strongest emphasis on the consequences that follow unwise living. As Wisdom cries out in the street and she never stops. Because if there is injustice, Wisdom will work, call, and bring justice to her people.

As we see Wisdom is using every effort, to tell the truth about consequences. She is urging people to realize the consequences that follow unwise living. Wisdom is urging people to realize their wrong acts before they are committed. In doing so, she portrays herself as gloating over the suffering that is to come for those who have refused to listen to her cry for justice and peace. And one can almost hear her say, “I told you so,” with no word of comfort or healing. As it seems there is rejoicing in Wisdom’s heaven over every sinner that tastes the bitter fruit of injustice.

Perhaps, Wisdom wants to awaken those in the public streets to the injustices that exist, and that they should join with Wisdom in creating a community of justice and peace. As Wisdom is fully aware of the conflict between those who follow the ways of just peace, and those who refuse to do so. In that, Wisdom uses the notion that foolish people have to learn the hard way. They have to experience the painful results of not loving justice. She shares that many unpleasant consequences come to those who choose foolish living. And many of these consequences cannot be changed. In other words, Wisdom shares the truth about consequences by expressing that many of them are irrevocable. But even in those irrevocable consequences, whereby something terrible has happened and life has been forever altered, the Christian gospel even has a message in that hour. It does not picture God as gloating over the sinner who suffers. Instead, there is rejoicing over the one who repents, even though there are consequences that cannot be altered.

As there is still hope for the persons who repent and change their ways. They hear the assurance of forgiveness. And by this forgiveness, they can better understand how God’s justice and peace, fit together. In that, we do not always understand how our faith and actions can transform our world, but we can listen to Wisdom’s call, which cries aloud to us still. She tells us of God’s

great love for all our neighbors. She shows us God's great love for those hidden places in need of holistic and radical justice. She shows God's great love for people who are living during times of great conflict, where there is a massive loss of life and deadly violence. Wisdom shows God's great love for those who are homeless due to a lack of affordable housing for young adults, seniors, and families. Wisdom shows God's great love for those in our churches and our communities in need of companionship, and a helping hand, and who desire hope-filled prayers.

So, how will our churches show the "things that make for peace?" How might we continue to 'be the church' intentional about an extravagant welcome for all, offering love and forgiveness, and accepting the invitation to embrace healing and repentance? How are we preparing ourselves to receive the power of God's love to transform our lives and the broader culture towards equal justice for all by proclaiming, 'Peace is possible?'