

Gospel lesson

We go further in the Gospel of Mark this week, after Jesus fed four thousand, noted lack of understanding in the people, and cured a blind man.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-teaching/>;
credit: LUMO

Mark 8:27-38

(NRSV)

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."

The word of God for the people of God

<Children's time>

<Hymn "Lord, Speak to Me">

UMH #463>

Message: Holding onto Wisdom



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/uncommon-wisdom/seventeenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/seventeenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

O Lord of infinite wisdom, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may realize the limits of our understanding, the infinity of Yours, and how (by following Your commands) we may apply Your wisdom and grace in the midst of our struggles. Amen.

We continue in the "Uncommon Wisdom" series today, "Holding onto Wisdom":

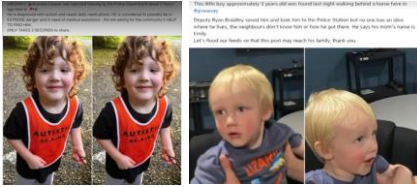
"If, as today's title suggests, we are going to hold onto wisdom, it is important for us to know **who** we're holding onto."¹

<Interactive Time>

In Proverbs we heard that Wisdom cries out in the street, in the busy hubs of social life. What is our modern-day street, the hub of social life for many people? <Let them respond>

¹ Theme summary taken from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/uncommon-wisdom/seventeenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes>.

Can we be sure with whom we are interacting there?
Why/why not? <Let them respond>



pictures screencaptured from
<https://www.yahoo.com/news/facebook-missing-child-scam-designed-004043935.html>

What is your instinct on hearing about a missing child?
<Let them respond>

Have you ever seen a scam Facebook post, maybe unwittingly reposted it? <Let them respond>

How did you learn it was a scam? <Let them respond>

What are some ways to identify false posts or scams on the internet? <Let them respond>

Some red flags: urgent request to share/flood the internet; comments turned off; vague on details.
Bigger red flags: request for personal info like SSN; money offer too good to be true; requires secrecy.

Spammers and phishers are getting more sophisticated daily, even using AI (artificial intelligence) to create clickbait from hacked accounts. How do we know who we can trust? Is it ever safe to click a link on the internet? <Let them respond>

A good rule of thumb is that if a person you know has not made a request like this before, they are probably not making it now – insist on speaking directly with them to confirm what needs to be done, preferably face-to-face, in person. Facial images and voice patterns can be simulated electronically if enough data are gathered on someone.

Behind every scam is a person seeking to gain from it. Are online risks particularly different than dealing with people face-to-face before the internet was? <Let them respond>

What do you think God would say about our use of the internet? What do you think Wisdom from Proverbs would tell us to do? <Let them respond>

Wisdom (or lack thereof) is not based on our level of technology. It has to do with our interpersonal dealings and relationships, and communication happens on every level of technology. Given that, what do you think is the number one thing we should keep in mind? <Let them respond>

Jesus summed up all of the law in two commandments:



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-rich-man/>; credit: LUMO

Love God with all that we are, and love one another.

Hold tight to that Wisdom! Love always involves a relationship, and relationships generally work out best in person.

The psalmist today proclaimed the glory and goodness of God. Yet despite how wonderful the Lord is, in Proverbs we heard of God working to share Wisdom with people, but getting scoffed at and turned down. Entangled in Sin, many people want to be in control rather than let God direct their relationship.

Others have been hurt by those who wrongly say they are doing Jesus's will when pushing their own selfish agendas. As a result, [those hurt] scoff at religion altogether, saying they know how to live better without the Lord in their lives. I think many people do not realize what they are doing in rejecting God because of what sinful people have done.

And look at Peter – he proclaimed Jesus as Messiah and then tried to correct Him instead of asking why or simply following faithfully. Was he mansplaining to **Jesus** what the role of the Messiah had to be?

We need to be clear on the relationship dynamics here. We are not in charge; God is. Only God has the infinite knowledge and wisdom to know what is best.



picture from

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So in this crazy world with different fads each week about how we should live, rather than stressing about keeping up with worldly wisdom, let us instead seek the Wisdom from above that brings peace. Give up the sinfulness of trying to control what should be and ask God to help you enjoy the blessing of what is.

Perhaps we could try these things:

- † Instead of automatically sharing internet posts, we check the facts to make sure we are sharing truth.
- † Instead of doomscrolling on the web, we pray, study the Bible, and discuss with other Christians how we see God's wisdom applicable to our lives.
- † Instead of keeping faith to yourself, share with the unchurched how the wisdom of God guides your daily living – and show God's love abundantly!
- † Instead of letting other events usurp worship time, invite others to come learn about Jesus and to live more fully by God's wisdom.

Take the internet with more than just a grain of salt. Make sure to speak with those you love and live with (rather than assuming you know their minds) before you put a stranger's needs ahead of them.

Let us reinforce our own and one another's faith journeys by asking God for guidance in everything.

Hold onto the divine Wisdom, knowing that it comes from the One who created and provides everything, the One who loves us beyond death, and the One who is even now crying out to us, every moment of every day, with hand outstretched to help us. For whether we realize it or not, our lives depend upon it.