

First Presbyterian Church of Plymouth, Michigan

Sunday, August 29, 2021

The Book of Proverbs

“Proverbs: Truth and Grace

Rev. Mark Hovermale

Welcome and Announcements — Rev. Mark Hovermale

Welcome to worship, today, our online worship service for Sunday August 29th.

First, just a big thanks to Pastor Ashley, Geff Phillips, Darlene Maginley, and, of course, Susan Underhill, for making this service a reality.

I have a couple of quick announcements for you. First, September 12th is the date of the full reopening for our Sunday services. The sanctuary worship service will be at 9:30 a.m. and the Upper Room service will be at 11:05 a.m.

On page 6 of this week’s bulletin, which you can also view online, you can see some of our fall Bible study offerings. More will come soon, but this is a great opportunity for you to reach up to God, reach out to our neighbors and reach deep in God's Word. Please check those out. It's a great opportunity this fall to get involved in Bible studies.

Next week, Labor Day weekend, we will have a week off of the videotaped worship service. We will take a break for Labor Day, and then the following week, September 12th, we will have a new video format online available to you.

The last announcement is about Susan Underhill. She's always behind the camera and you never see her. I can see her, but you can't! We just want to take a moment and say “thank you” to her for all she has done for this church, not only during COVID but for the last 12 years. We couldn't have done it without her. You don't get to see all the work she has done and does. You see only the finished product! Susan is finishing up her time here and will be spending more time with her family and friends. We just want, again, to say “thank you,” Susan, for all you've done for First Presbyterian Church in Plymouth, and for the Kingdom of God.

At this time we will have our opening prayer.

Rev. Ashley S. Ashley — Opening Prayer

Let us pray. Gracious and loving God, you are infinite, eternal, unchangeable and glorious, full of love and compassion, abundant in grace and truth. As we go about our lives each day, we see signs of your glory. As you gather us as a community of faith today, we are reminded of your closeness.

Oh God, all of our ways are in full view before you. You see us at our best, when we are seeking your presence, adhering to your Word, caring for your creation and loving our

neighbor. You also, though, see us at our worst. We turn from your face, ignore your instruction, abuse your world and deceive your children. As we prepare for worship now, we recognize, that although we are often disobedient, you call us by name to be your disciples. May this time together be an opportunity to celebrate the blessing of your abundant grace and truth. Amen.

Geff Phillips plays guitar and sings “Take My Life”

Darlene Maginley, Director of Children’s Ministry – Children’s Sermon

Good morning, kids! A few years ago, when my daughter was about eight years old, our family went on a vacation. At our hotel there was a water slide into the pool. You had to go through a tunnel, and you came out of the tunnel just as you splashed into the pool. While she was doing that, my daughter kept yelling, “Mom! Come watch me! Come watch me!

I know that you have done that in your life, too. You have called for mom and dad to come watch you when you have been running really fast, or you're doing a cannonball into the swimming pool, or maybe you're flipping a pancake into the air. It is so much fun to have people watch us when we're doing important things, or silly things, or fun things, isn't it?

In the Bible scripture, today, there's a verse that we're talking about that says that God watches everything that we do. Usually when we think about that we don't feel very good, do we? We think about all of the things that we have done wrong that God is seeing. We don't remember that God also sees the good things that we do. We forget that God loves us and we forget that God will always forgive us for the wrong things that we do.

Right now I would like to take a minute for us to talk to God together.

Dear God, we thank you when we are being silly, that you are smiling and laughing with us. We thank you that when we do something good in our day that you are smiling at us with pride. And we thank you, that you are applauding all of our achievements and accomplishments. As we start our day, we are going to shout out, “Hey God, watch this!” Thank you for being there to share all of those good things with us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

So today, kids, the next time that you do a cannonball or you flip a pancake, remember to shout out, “Hey God, come watch this!”

Rev. Ashley – Scripture Reading

Proverbs 5:21-22 (NIV, New International Version)

*21 For your ways are in full view of the LORD,
and he examines all your paths.*

*22 The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them;
the cords of their sins hold them fast.*

Friends, this is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God.

Rev. Hovermale – Sermon: “Truth and Grace”

Well it's time for the sermon! I have got a story for you. It comes from one of the ads from the 2010 Super Bowl. I know! I'm going back a long ways, but I have got to tell you this story. It is absolutely a hilarious commercial. The sponsor of the commercial was Cars.com, a large online classified car sales site. The ad was a fictional story; they paid a lot of money for the Super Bowl ad of a wonder child named Timothy Richmond. (To watch the actual ad, go to: [2010 Cars.com Super Bowl Commercial](#))

From his earliest years Timothy displayed an amazing level of confidence, and his confidence came from knowledge. This was a one-minute commercial, by the way.

As a toddler, the commercial video shows Timothy eating in his highchair. He sees a pan of food cooking on the stove catch fire. Knowing somehow, as a little kid, as a baby, that baking soda puts out fires, he throws his rattle. It hits the baking soda and puts out the fire!

As a young boy about to ride a bike, Timothy stands straddling the bike as his dad prepares to put on the training wheels. Then Timothy says this, “Balance, momentum, and a low center of gravity.” And with that knowledge fully absorbed, before Timothy's dad can put the training wheels on the bike, he takes off!

In junior high, this commercial shows how Timothy confidently walks up to a teen on an Italian beach who has been stung on the leg by a jellyfish. Acting on his knowledge of first aid, Timothy pours vinegar on the inflamed skin. He explains--now this is in perfect Italian-- that vinegar can neutralize jellyfish strings!

As a high school student on a safari in Africa, he uses his knowledge of veterinary skills to deliver a baby Bengal tiger that was breached. Let me stop for a second. *That* was an interesting part of the commercial!

Finally, as an adult, Timothy gets out of his car on a highway as a tornado is coming through. He approaches a bus full of cheerleaders. Using his knowledge of tornados and storm cells, he helps them get to a low level area. Just as they dive into the low place, the tornado takes up the bus!

The narrator then explains when it came time for Timothy to buy a new car, we see him standing, now scared, in front of a new car lot. He was just as nervous as the rest of us when it is time to buy a new car. Just then, Timothy sees a sign for the Cars.com website. He pulls out a cell phone and the narration concludes the whole commercial, which cost Cars.com something like \$4 million, by saying that Timothy Richmond got his knowledge at Cars.com, regained his confidence, and got the perfect car at the perfect price!

Now this commercial was hilarious. It cost the sponsor a lot of money, but it illustrates a point. No matter how much knowledge and confidence you have in areas of your life and I have, there are other areas where the fact is, no matter how smart you and I are, apart from God's help, (for to be honest, can we be honest this morning?) apart from God's help, we are relatively clueless about important spiritual truths and how to live them.

Even though we may have knowledge in a lot of other areas, we are clueless when it comes to God's Word and how to apply it without God's help. This is where our study of Proverbs over the last few weeks this summer can inspire us. The writer of Proverbs always paints a beautiful view of the concept of wisdom. Wisdom, as we've said before, is depicted as one of the first gifts that God has given us. It's an essential characteristic for living a great life.

I've heard that the book of Proverbs has been described as the secret to effective living.

That brings us to today. If I could just be honest with you, our scripture passage for today—because of its context, Proverbs, chapter 5, verse 21, is awkward. It's a little intimidating because the context around it is this. Right before the passage that we have read today, the writer of Proverbs talks about staying with your spouse and not sleeping with another person's spouse. It was a little graphic. Sexual immorality is basically the talking point that leads to verse 21. Spoiler alert! If you haven't read the first part of the chapter, it says not to commit adultery. But that's a different sermon for a different time.

Now Proverbs 5:21 says,

“For your ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all your paths.”

Now after this passage, comes an additional message. in verse 23, we read,

“For lack of discipline they will die, led astray by their own great folly. A wicked man is led astray by his own great folly.”

But right before that, *“For your ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all your paths.”*

Pretty intimidating! It made me think of a story. Fourteen years ago, when Abby, our first daughter was born, we had a baby monitor. Now the baby monitor was like a radio. You know, you put it in the room, and while you may be watching TV, you're listening. Here's what I could hear: Either they were calling my seating group for a flight, (really garbled) or the military was putting on a drone attack. I couldn't tell what the sounds were! You could not understand a word of what was going on there. You couldn't guess what was happening in the room because the audio was so garbled.

Then Lily was born seven years later. In seven years of advancements in technology, we bought a video monitor. This thing was great! We could see everything happening in the room and hear, as well. After a while, though, it kind of creeped us out. We were

seeing everything, we were staring at it and we just said, "We have got to stop!" So we turned off the camera.

This passage from Proverbs can be is unsettling to us as that camera was to Sarah and me. All our ways are in full view of God! I mean, that thought I had last week, the words I used then, the way I acted over there, that guy who cut me off in traffic when I "theologically" told him that was wrong.

This is where we start getting into the idea of an angry God, the concept of an angry God, because we think He knows everything we've done. This concept is opposed to God's grace, saved from our sins by His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Again, it goes back to the passage, "For your ways (and my ways) are in full view of the Lord and He examines all our paths."

One theologian wrote, "Humans are accountable and are transparent to their Maker, before whom even the cosmic depths lie open." What does that mean? We are accountable and God knows everything. The Lord, it seems, knows all we do, examines it, and judges it. This can be pretty intimidating, but can I say, I think it can also be pretty liberating, not just intimidating!

You see, much of the world today, says to us, "Do whatever you want, Mark, whatever feels good, you do! It doesn't matter. You just do what you want to do. It's your life!" But this text reminds us that the Lord is watching every decision I make, even the bad ones. There is no dark, there is no off switch to this camera or the lens of God. It isn't the baby monitor. We just can't turn God's lens off when we want to do so. You *know* people like that. Yeah, you know what I mean! People who turn it on and off.

You know people who are one way when the boss is there and act in a different way when he's not, or she's not. Replace the word "boss" for spouse or friend or family or parent, and it would be honest to do so as we're thinking of those people. We're looking in the mirror because we're like that sometimes, too. At least I can talk for *myself*, and you can come along for the ride. Sometimes I act like I can actually shut off the lens of God in my life on certain things. I can simply turn it off, and then it causes me to live a different life in one space than I do in another. It's almost like I have a different set of boundaries.

Another area I have a different set of boundaries, can you relate to this, it's like a movable sort of ethics of right and wrong. Don't get me wrong, I would describe myself as someone who wants to get it right most of the time. I think if I could look at you through this video camera, you would feel the same way. At least, that's the image we want to give out. Again, one more time, "For your ways are in full view of the Lord and He examines all your paths."

Here's how I sum it up. I've heard a phrase that's been floating around for years in the Christian world. I'm going to get to that phrase in a second. It summarizes the whole last ten minutes of what I have been talking about. You and I, we're not living for the crowds. We are not even living for our bosses or the people we want to impress, or even our friends and family who love us. That's not what we're living for.

Here comes the phrase: We are actually living for an audience of one! We're living for an audience of one, and that's our main point today. If you gather nothing else from the last ten to twelve minutes, this is it! The main point: we truly live for an audience of one and that's God.

Think about it this way. He's a musician who is playing before a big crowd and you're there. You might see some things, but you won't see all the little details. But if you have that musician playing right in front of you, you will catch every detail.

Let me give you another example. I went to the Garth Brooks concert just before the pandemic hit. There were 70,000 people at Ford Field singing every word, by the way, and I saw it! I could see but I was far away. I couldn't tell if he messed up any chords or if he missed any lyrics. His band is something! I couldn't see all the details but imagine if Garth Brooks showed up at my house. Now that would kind of surprise me, but if he did and he brought his guitar which, as Garth Brooks, he *should* bring his guitar, he's going to play just for me. If it's just him and me, I would catch every word and every chord he played, because he'd have an audience of one!

This can cause us a feeling of pressure like we have to *perform* for God and that's dangerous. But the flip side, what I want you to concentrate on, is this, "playing" sort of speaks for our lives. Living for an audience of one relieves a lot of pressure. We simply live our lives by God's Word. That's how we live for an audience of one, in all we say and do. You and I are supposed to live our lives to glorify God. We are not here to impress anyone else or live for anyone else, even if we love them. They may love us or be proud of us, but our chief objective is to glorify God.

Here's a question: I want to think about this one. Okay, how would your life look different this week if you lived it for an audience of one? *How would your life look different this week if you lived it for an audience of one?* What kind of parent would I be, or spouse or worker or friend would you be? What would I spend my time doing if I had an audience of one? I thought about it. What would you *not* spend your time doing. Wow! How would your life look different this week if you lived it for an audience of just one?

Amen, and thanks be to God!

Rev. Ashley — Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray. Gracious and loving God, we are thankful that you use your power and might not to distance yourself from us but instead to draw us closer together. You have a full view of our paths and ways. You know what we're thinking, while we're acting, and how we are feeling, yet you still invite us to come to you in prayer.

So we come to you today with 1000 different things on our mind and in our hearts. We pray for the world that you have made. We pray for Afghanistan and the turmoil so many people face. They face determination of what and who and where is safe. We pray for families to stay united as they seek safety and shelter. I pray for those who find themselves in a new place, that they would be met with kindness and hospitality. We pray for peace, not only in Afghanistan but also in the world. We pray that, in your

name, evil powers would be overthrown and justice would reign, so that all of your children may freely enjoy your creation and joyfully sing your praise.

We pray for all who have suffered through fires and floods, tornadoes and hurricanes, violence and addiction, oppression and discrimination, physical and mental illness, disappointment and loss. In the midst of chaos and danger may we hear your small voice speaking to us. In the aftermath of silence and devastation may we experience your comforting presence surrounding us, as we grow day by day into faithful disciples of your Kingdom. Teach us to be your hands and feet, to discern your holy voice.

Bind us together as the body of Christ, even as we pray the words that you first taught us to say,

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.

Geff Phillips plays guitar and sings “*Wholly Yours*”

Rev. Hovermale — Benediction and Blessing

May we go forth from this service and live a life for an audience of one.

And may the blessing of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be on you and yours today, and forever more. Amen.