

## “Shared Wisdom”

Psalm 119: 9-12, 23-24, 32 and Proverbs 4: 10-18

Sunday, May 3, 2026

Saint Luke’s Presbyterian Church

Rev. Jody Andrade

Well, Saint Luke’s, welcome to May, where the students are studying, the teachers are grading, and the clubs are banqueting. And we are all searching for that perfect graduation gift.

Let’s take a moment to catch our breath. Breathe in God’s love. Breathe out God’s mercy. Breathe in God’s wisdom. Breathe out God’s peace.

May is a busy time for everyone who has a young person in their life, as we celebrate them and simultaneously attempt to download every bit of wisdom we know into their brains. How fitting that today’s lectionary text focuses on the learning process: mastering lessons and using that wisdom in our everyday lives.

If you’re delivering one of the many commencement addresses this season, listen up: Proverbs and the Book of Psalms have something to say. Proverbs 4:10 opens with an attention grabbing line that makes us lean forward and tilt our ear toward the speaker:

*“Hear my child, and accept my words that the years of your life may be many.”*

In other words: “Listen up and you’ll live long.”

And in response we think, “Quick, tell us: what is this wisdom and how can it lead us to a long, happy, full life?”

During decision making time, wisdom is a hot commodity. And it’s a durable good. Once you have wisdom, it will remain stashed in your pocket indefinitely. You can simply pull it out for reference whenever you need it for the rest of your life. So how do we get this wisdom—to use now and to use later?

Some wisdom we receive through *observation*. Raise your hand if you love to watch scary movies. (Me neither.) Who here has seen at least one scary movie?

After you've seen a Stephen King masterpiece, you've learned through observation that if you're being chased by someone or something, do not run down into the basement! Do not run into the garage full of sharp tools. Run out the door!

If you've ever been to church on Easter, or when the preschoolers are singing and the graduates are being honored, you know through past observation you need to arrive early to get a good seat.

And if you're a brand-new pastor at Saint Luke's, you learn that on Tartan Trot race day, if you linger long enough, you may very well go home with one of the extra cakes from the awards table.

This is wisdom. Lighthearted wisdom, yes, but useful for living your best life. After all, a life with cake is better than a life without cake.

Other wisdom we learn through *study*. In scripture, God gives us the law: wisdom for living life well. Don't steal. Don't kill. Don't be jealous. Follow the true and living God, don't get distracted by shiny, inconsequential things that will leave you empty. Be kind. Love. It's all right there in Exodus 20's Ten Commandments, or in Jesus' condensed version: *Love God and love others as you love yourself.*<sup>i</sup>

So there's wisdom from observation and wisdom from study. But what do we do when the right choice isn't the obvious choice? What if all that watching and studying isn't enough to cover the challenging decisions we should make to live a full life? Where do we find deep, complex, applied wisdom?

Wouldn't it be lovely to have a sign at every fork in the road that reads: good to the left, bad to the right. But life isn't so simple. We need more than a sign with arrows: we need wisdom to make decisions for ourselves. Ongoing, evolutionary, developing wisdom. A living relationship with the wisdom that emanates from the Word himself, Jesus Christ. And that resource is right here, in Christ's church.

As we grow older, we are faced with more and more choices. As kids, many of go to church with our parents. But eventually we leave home; we move across the country or to a new country altogether. We enter a new life stage where honestly, it's easier to sleep late Sunday mornings than get yourself to worship.

Is there anything better than sipping coffee in your pajamas until noon? And when it happens once in a blue moon, it's a little slice of heaven.

But when Sunday mornings begin to feel like every other morning, an emptiness sets in. We begin to miss the wisdom in God's fourth commandment: the gift of Sabbath. Of setting aside specific time for worship. Of getting up and getting ready to meet God. We miss the insights in the sermon, the grounding connection of prayer. And we miss the gentle teachings from our church school leader and the people seated in the pews all around us.

As Christians we encounter the wisdom of God through Christ's presence in our faith communities. In the church of Jesus Christ.

At church we find people we respect, people whose words and deeds emanate wisdom. Their instruction, through direct teaching moments or by modeling healthy relationships, sticks with us. The learning that happens in church is not a bunch of facts you memorize for a test and forget the next day. The learning, the faith we build at church is *relational*. It's lasting. It's "sticky faith."<sup>ii</sup> It seeps into our bones and doesn't wash away.

It's the same wisdom Jesus gifted to us through his relational ministry 2000 years ago.

If you've grown up in this church, you've had wisdom coming at you from every angle. You've studied scripture in church school and built relationships on mission trips, in Youth group, and in Presbyterian Women's gatherings. You've heard God's word for you in both the sermon and the children's story.

You've had people care for you—really care—who aren't being paid, who aren't related to you. They just want to live Christian lives alongside you. You've been embraced as part of a large, extended family here and I pray you've felt wrapped up in grace by the people of Saint Luke's. The wisdom from walking a Christian path together is a gift of community. Praise God for the church!

Our upcoming summer sermon series is entitled "Dinner with Jesus." We will all soon realize much of Jesus' wisdom was shared around food. It's no coincidence that we share so many meals together here at Saint Luke's. When we gather around a table there are relationships to build and wisdom to impart. And remember, Jesus in his wisdom said, "Let the little children come to me." Wisdom flows both ways:

from the children to adults, and from adults to children. If you've heard a children's story time exchange here in worship, you know the insights of a child are often a tremendous blessing. There is great wisdom shared in those small voices of truth.

My prayer is that gathered around tables we, like Jesus, have authentic conversations about the real parts of life that we aren't always sure we can share. At Christ's table, we can bring our true selves. So in Saint Luke's Great Hall, we ask open-ended questions rather than those with a yes/no answer. In the Youth lounge, we talk through things rather than rushing to the "right" response. We listen to one another. Closely. Carefully. Because surely the wisdom we find in relationship here in church, at every table, is the wisdom we should employ in our everyday lives.

*"Hear my child and accept my words that the years of your life may be many."*

Saint Luke's recently held a memorial service for beloved member Ed McIntosh. I was surprised to see a familiar face at the reception. Carey Wilson is not a member here, he just happens to live next door to the McIntoshes and Ed was his friend. And Cary and I just happened to graduate from high school together. And Carey said something surprising to me: "Jody, though we haven't seen each other in decades, I was just thinking about you last week."

Carey explained his son went through confirmation this Spring and it had him thinking about his own confirmation at Shallowford Presbyterian 45 years ago. He remembered his confirmation partner, the adult with whom he was paired, was my dad, Jim Reedy. He recalled my dad's very cool blue Toyota. And he remembers their caring discussions. It was clear that long after confirmation ended, my dad remained a trusted person for Carey at church.

What a blessing for Carey to remember my dad to me. My dad died two years ago and stories of him are precious.

What a blessing that Dad chose to attend church each Sunday morning and committed to sharing his wisdom by mentoring that young man.

And what a blessing that church intentionally set up a multi-generational confirmation process, where a non-parent became a spiritual conversation partner with an adolescent. An older adult's investment of time and care made a younger adult's faith "sticky," and it seeped so deeply into the bones of 14-year-old Carey Wilson that he remembers it to this day.

Saint Luke's member Edna Schell joined this church eons ago and was very active in many ministries. But the Saint Luke's memory she chose to share with me is the relationship she and her husband had with two four-year-old twins. During Sunday morning worship, one twin insisted on squeezing his little body onto the pew between Edna and Jim. Despite being 80 years older than the twins, Edna learned from them about the power of church relationship. This wisdom was so important to her, she shared it with her new pastor from her hospice bed.

Incline your ear to the wisdom in this room, dear ones of Saint Luke's. Find someone from another generation, a younger or older sibling in Christ, and glean wisdom from them. And in turn, share your wisdom. And trust that when you do, no matter how many more years of your life you have left to live, they will be rich ones.

Proverbs 4:10: "Hear, my child, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many."

May we always recognize the wisdom of Christ in one another.

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Matthew 22: 39

<sup>ii</sup> The Fuller Youth Institute has done extensive research on the topic of faith retention from adolescence through young adulthood. For more information, go to <https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/stickyfaith>.