

Iain Macritchie: Proverbs 14:12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 July 2016

Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 00] If we could, could we turn back to God's word now as we find it in the Old Testament in the book of Proverbs chapter 14? And I'd like us to take for our texts this morning the words that we find in verse 12, Proverbs 14 verse 12.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

There's a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. Friends, I'd like to start off by this morning asking you a question.

That is, how wise are you? How wise are you? In all the decisions that you take in life, in all the various situations that you find yourselves in, in your family, in your community, in your workplace, whatever you find yourselves each and every day, how much wisdom do you, how much wisdom do I exercise?

That's quite a question. I'm sure we can all think of times in our lives where looking back in retrospect had we exercised perhaps a little bit more wisdom, an outcome would have been completely different.

[1 : 40] It's true to say that all too often we can find ourselves jumping headlong into situations without really thinking about what we are doing or what we're saying.

But how are we to know what it is to be wise? What is it to be wise?

Well, scripture tells us that wisdom is precious. In Job 28:16 we read that wisdom is worth more than all the gold of offer. In the book of Proverbs itself we read that the value of wisdom is better than rubies and all things that may be desired are not to be compared to them.

So wisdom is better than gold and better than wisdom and it's clearly something that is desirable, something that we should aspire to, having something that is valuable.

The Oxford English Dictionary says that wisdom is the quality of having experience, knowledge and good judgment, the quality of being wise.

[3 : 08] Friends, you might be sitting here today and you might have knowledge and you might have experience, you might have good judgment and that's good. These are good things to have.

Friends, the wisdom that we're looking at today isn't a wisdom that comes from around us, from the expectations of those around us but from God himself.

And it's a wisdom that's so precious that it's been recorded, yes, in the whole of scripture but more specifically here in the book of Proverbs from the pen of King Solomon himself.

Now Solomon, you remember, became known for his great wisdom. In his life he spoke around 3000 Proverbs and 800 of these we can find here in this book before us today.

Along with Solomon it's thought that Egar, the son of Jackie and King Lemuel and his mother were also contributors to this book of wisdom.

[4 : 24] Where did proverbial teaching come from though? Well, this kind of teaching is one of the most ancient forms of instruction because a proverb is able to express such a profound statement in few words.

I'm sure you're all able to think of proverbs that you hear every day. There are many in scripture itself. Pride goes before a fall or iron sharpens iron.

These are words that are taken from this treasure trove that we have before us. You know I have this little book at home, it's called Sign Posts from Proverbs. It's a really helpful book because this book has been split up into categories.

I won't go through them all just now but I'll go through one or two of them. You've got a category on money and a category on gossip and a category on bringing up children.

There's a category on business and there's even pages on how we should treat our animals. Now this little book, Sign Posts from Proverbs, it illustrates the fact that the observation of human nature within proverbs is so minute and accurate.

[6 : 03] It's so practical and pointed. Sadly our lives are littered with trials, with temptations, with difficulties.

Yes we might get words of wisdom from friends and family but you know it's only God himself that truly knows how to deal with our problems.

And his book of Proverbs that we have compiled here, they are if you like a guide to us as to how to cope with the complexities of daily living, of how to deal with all the subtleties of the temptations that come our way day by day.

And you know what I would truly commend you to, divin to Proverbs if you can. It might even be helpful just to everyday read one proverb.

You'll find there such wisdom and instruction. Now our text this morning goes a little deeper than how to use our money or bring up our children as important as these things are.

[7 : 24] Because the proverb that we have before us in verse 12, it's concerned not only about how we live our life here in time, but also how what we do here in time will relate to the endless ages of eternity.

Now this proverb in verse 12, it's so important that not only do we find it once in this book but twice. It's also found in chapter 16. And so surely we can see that here we have a profound statement.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. What is this way that's been spoken of then in this proverb?

Let's think about this for a short time this morning. As we go through life, I'm sure that it's fair to say that we are attracted to what the Bible calls the broad way.

The broad way. Now the broad way is undoubtedly so appealing. You see on the broad way there are few restrictions, there aren't really that many rules, or if there are rules that they can be changed to suit.

[8 : 50] On this broad way everyone is able to do what they think is right. That's okay for you, but I'm going to do it this way. This is a way that has so many pleasant sights and sounds on either side.

Sights and sounds that are there to entertain you and to distract you. This is a popular path and no doubt on this path, on this broad way you'll find friends and family who are journeying along with you and colleagues and neighbours.

Because it's so, so wide there's room for everyone. This is a path of self-will and self-gratification. There are no limitations.

And you know what? Anything goes. Alongside this path I think it's true to say that there are almost flashing neon signs with the proverbs of the world on them saying things like live and let live or eat, drink and be merry or you only live once.

Or life's too short. I wonder if you've ever heard that before or you said it to yourself. There are so many friends' voices shouting to you on this road telling you where you need to go and what you need to do to be happy.

[10 : 24] And I speak from experience because I have been there. Unfortunately that those who are on this road often, they listen to these voices.

They go with the flow and they carry on regardless. But I wonder if we were to ask ourselves this morning where is this path going?

Where if you are on this broad road today, where exactly are you trying to get to? You see there is one major problem with being on this path.

And that is we find in our text that it is because it is a way that seems right to a man. It seems right. All appears to be well and in order.

Lives are being lived freely without question. But the fact is that this way, this road, this path, it is built on lies and deception.

[11 : 40] Those who are travelling along this road are daily deceived into thinking that all will be well. Do you think all will be well friends with your soul?

These travellers vary. Many are morally upright. They are good neighbours. They are helpful, kind people. They are respectable in the community.

But yet they are on the wrong path. They are on this path and they are travelling blindly. And it is end as we read his death.

I wonder if I am talking about anyone here this morning. Does this strike a chord with you? Can you say to yourself, yes, that is me. You see the tour guide, there is a tour guide.

There is the tour guide on this broad way as the devil himself. It is Satan. And it is his grand plan and scheme to shut out the things of God at any given opportunity.

[12 : 57] He makes the things of the world so appealing to you so that you will have absolutely no notion of the things of an afterlife. That you will have no regard for God himself.

As I said earlier, it is so easy for us to go with the flow. But isn't it true to say that it is only dead fish that go with the flow?

Floating aimlessly down the river with no real control of where they are going to end up? Well, it is also true to say that the fish that are alive, they are battling upstream.

They are going against the flow, going against the current, determined not to go with the flow so that they can go where they need to be, that they can get to where they need to be.

I wonder if you are drifting aimlessly like this fish through life yourself. I wonder if you are being carried along with the flow.

[14 : 07] Yes, you may have many blessings to show in your life and these are wonderful God-given things. You might have children, grandchildren, you might have a good job, a good pension, a respectable name in the community. All these things are good in and of themselves.

You may even here this morning be the most religious person in the church. You may be just like the Pharisee, keeping all the rules that you can, making sure that everything looks good on the outside.

But so what? What use is any of this if this morning you are still on the broad road?

You see, no matter what we have in life, whether it is a good name or whatever it is, without Christ we have nothing.

You then read in the end of our verse of the outcome of remaining on this broad road. It is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death or is the way to death.

[15 : 32] What a solemn reality that is for us this morning here in Carloway, that if you are on this broad road, you are on a road that is leading to an eternal death.

This is probably a thought that you maybe don't give too much time to, but isn't it true that we are being reminded of this fact so often?

This isn't just talking about a physical death, but rather the eternal death that awaits you this morning. If you are not in Christ and you die without Christ, we have so many warnings in Scripture about walking in darkness along this broad road.

In Jeremiah 23.12 we are reminded of the solemnity of such a state where we read, This really paints a picture in our mind.

I'm sure we've all had experience of walking along a sheet of ice on a pavement with no grips on our shoes. We've lost control and we've started sliding unable to stop ourselves until eventually we find ourselves in a heap on the ground, bruised and possibly with broken bones.

[17 : 15] That's where the broad road is leading us. It is a slippery path. It is a path that if you are not taken off it, you will continue to slide down and you will find out that the end of its way is death.

We also read in Deuteronomy 28.29, And you shall grope at noon day as a blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways, and you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you.

And there shall be no one to help you. It's like you're in a dark place, a place of danger, and although as you go down this broad road there are so many people with you on it, the reality is you are all alone.

Do you realise that you're on this slippery path? Do you know in your heart that even today you desperately need to change direction?

We're reminded in Matthew chapter 7 in the parable of the builders of exactly how wrong man's perceived wisdom can be.

[18 : 55] He might think it's wise to be on the broad road. Here we have two men who were builders and both of them were going to build for themselves a house.

There was a difference though, because they had very different ideas as to how they would build a house. One builder was wise and one builder was foolish.

And of course you remember that the foolish builder decided to build his house on the sand, just like building your house on the macher there.

It would have no doubt, it would have been dry weather like it is today, and he would have made the assumption that these bright and sunny days would never stop, and so his house went up.

The wise builder on the other hand he decided to build his house on the rock. He knew that although the weather was sunny and bright, that there would come a day when it wouldn't be.

[20 : 11] He knew that grey clouds would overshadow the sun and that storms would come and batter his house and so that it needed to be prepared for every eventuality.

He took necessary precautions. And of course as predicted the storms came. The storms came and they lashed both houses, furious torrents of rain battered the buildings.

But because the foolish man was unable to see past the sunny days of his own experience, because he built on the sand, when the storm came, the sand beneath the house was washed away so that the structure fell in on top of him with an almighty crash.

Its ruin was complete. Of course the wise man who'd built on the solid foundation, he was wise and because of his wisdom, his house, on a good foundation, no matter what storms had hit it, it stood proud having defied every furious blast.

And you know if you're on the broad road this morning, if you're living for today and for tomorrow, if you're unable to see past the things around you, no matter how good and proper these things are in and of themselves, I'm not saying these things are bad.

[21 : 57] But when we're living for them, when we're on that broad road, we're just the same as the foolish builder. There was a way that seemed right to him, but the end was destruction.

You see, every ambition and every plan, every word you speak, every deed that you do, they're all as it were, a building block and as all these different things happen in your life, it's as if these blocks being laid show the structure of your life farming.

But if you are building all these blocks of legitimate things on a foundation of sand, friends, it's going to come down crashing around you.

If you're building your house on the foundation of worldly wisdom, of the wisdom that we hear shouting at us through the media every day and desperately trying to get our attention, if that is where we're getting our wisdom from, well friends, it might satisfy, it might look good for a time, but when the storms come, it will not last.

Are you a wise or a foolish builder this morning? What other option is there? If you're here and you're on this broad road, what other road is there?

[23 : 44] How can you get off this broad road? Maybe you're on it and you know you're on it and you want to get off it. Is there a way? Absolutely.

Friends, that's why I stand here this morning. That's why your minister stands here week after week after week. We stand here to out of love point you in the right direction.

We're to be like those wise builders who build their house on the rock. We're to build our lives on the rock of ages, the sure foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

It's all about Christ. And as soon as our building blocks start to be built upon Christ, as soon as our lives are being led from Him, very quickly you will find that you are no longer on this broad road, but rather that narrow road that leads to eternal life.

John 14.6 says, I am the way He is the way. I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

[25 : 06] And you know it's only when you come to know Christ as the way that you experience real freedom. You might think you're free now, but when you come to know Christ, you will know real freedom.

Now I'm not saying it's an easy road, it absolutely is, and we cannot expect to wear the crown if we don't bear the cross. But the point is that when we're on this path, we're not as we once were going it alone.

We begin to get us through appreciation and awareness of why it is we're here. Do you ever wonder to yourself what is life all about?

Why am I here? Well you know when you find yourself on this narrow path, you get an appreciation not only for the beautiful creation, but for the Creator Himself.

You might be sitting here and saying, well I don't want to be on this narrow path. I don't want to be a narrow-minded Christian. It's stifling, it's not nice.

[26 : 22] Friends, how wrong you are. And I think I've said this here before and I'll say it again. How narrow is it to think that this is it?

You live, you die, end of story. Friends, can you not see how narrow that is? This road that I am commending to you is a broad road in the best sense, or a narrow road I should say in the best sense of the word narrow.

And it's not until you begin journeying along this road for yourself that you realise that you are on a path that is liberating you and you wonder why on earth you weren't on this path years ago.

Those of us here who find themselves on the narrow path already, those of us who are Christians, we need to beware.

We need to be vigilant, we need to watch our step, we need to at all points, and should be aware of that. We need to be vigilant, we need to watch our step, we need to at all points ensure that the one who has taken us on to this path, Jesus Christ, that he has the pre-eminence.

[27 : 49] It's difficult, it's hard, we have many bitter cups of providence to drink from, many difficult things in our lives to contend with.

That is reality. But friends, if we truly keep our eye on Christ, no matter what our circumstances is, we will be like the one who kept his hand to the plough and his furrow was straight.

And that reminds me about a little story perhaps the children would like to listen to this story. And this story is about two little boys who were in a field, a snowy field, and they decided to have a race.

I'm sure some people have maybe heard this story before. And they decided that they would run from one end of the field to the other end. It was quite a big field. And so they went.

They ran and they ran and they ran and they ran until they got to the other side of the field, both of them puffing and panting. I don't know who won the race, but I do know that they looked back and what they saw was their footprints, their footprints in the snow.

[29 : 10] Now one of the little boys, his footprints, were all over the place, going in and out, winding this way and that way. They weren't in a straight line.

Whereas the other little boy, his footprints, were as straight as a dye. He'd run the whole field in such a straight line.

And his friend said to him, how on earth did you manage to run in such a straight line? To which his friend replied, we'll see this post here. I kept my eye on that post as soon as I set off and I didn't take my eye off it until I reached the fence.

You know, I think this is such a wonderful, simple illustration of what it is to keep our eye on Christ. When we keep our eye on Him at all times, we're not going to deviate to the left or to the right on this narrow path.

But if we take our eye off our Savior and let the noise of the world infiltrate our hearts and our minds, we'll find ourselves veering this way and that and consequently, we will miss a blessing.

[30 : 31] But you know, it's wonderful that the Lord, this very morning delights in mercy with His amnesty finished.

It's my prayer that your ears would be opened so that while you're on this broad road, you would hear the voice of God behind you, beckoning you with the words, this is the way.

Walk ye in it, because that's what it is to be born again. That's what repentance is, a complete change of direction.

Friends, why don't you listen to His voice? Don't be like those that we read in Matthew 5.14, the blind leading the blind.

That's a phrase, a proverb that we've all heard before. We know what happens when the blind lead the blind. They both end up in the ditch. The beginning of the sermon, I asked you what it was to be wise.

[31 : 48] As I close, I wondered if you ask yourself the question again, am I wise? What your answer would be? Of course, through right wisdom, it can only flow from God himself.

It can only flow from knowing Christ as our own personal saviour. Anything else is man-centered. If you're here without Christ, if you're still on that broad road, I would urge you, I would plead with you, please, please, call out to your Lord today, ask Him to enable you to turn you back on those things that are leading you straight to the pit of hell itself.

More time is marching on. Why waste another moment on this broad road?

Because at the end of the day, the only path that gives you any real direction is the path that leads to Christ.

Friends, what path are you on this morning? Amen and we pray that the Lord would bless His one or two thoughts into His name be the glory.