

## "The Tongue Of The Teacher"

"The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word." Isaiah 50:4.

(An education prep rally. See addendum # 1)

The lessons this morning put emphasis on teaching and learning, on wisdom and understanding. This seems quite appropriate as teachers and students are getting back into their first semester routines. We need good teachers and mentors to inspire us to become the best that we can be. They are our educational captains to guide us upon the waters of the day to day accumulation of knowledge, development of skills and the growth of wisdom.

### I. We Need Good Teacher to Impart Knowledge-Proverbs 1:20-33

The writer of Proverbs gave sound advise to anyone who would become wise. He informed us that even from the street corners and the market places one could learn wisdom. In 1986, Rod Wiltse and I were in Kano, Nigeria. We discovered there an insatiable thirst for knowledge. Men and boys would come into the market place to sell their wares. There they would receive the latest news, read at least two newspapers and go back to their villages to share their knowledge with their kin. For a people who lived in some of the remotest areas of Kano, they kept up with local and world news, current events and the latest trends.

It seems a shame that many of our boys and girls in metropolitan areas like St. Louis are far from knowing what is going on in the world around them. Many along with adults are not taking advantage of the media information and educational opportunities that are available to them. The writer of Proverbs' analysis seems descriptive, "*Wisdom cries out in the streets, in the squares she raises her voice. At the highest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks? 'How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge'"* Proverbs 1:20-22,

As much as some of our children have needed encouragement to stay in school, study hard and make the most of their education, I was chagrined to learn that some national leaders were encouraging parents to keep their children home or to opt out of hearing the President of the United States speak on education last Tuesday. In my estimation, our crisis in education has more to do with a lack of inspiration than it does with the availability of educational opportunities. Our children need to be inspired. Those who can inspire them to better apply themselves to learning need to do so. Such inspiration needs to come from the White House as well as from the shacks, shanties, the inner cities, the suburbs and exurbia.

We in America must come together to help each child be the best that he or she can be because they will be competing in a global market which is fueled by the latest technology. As a hopeful American, it has been difficult for me to understand why we have such poor education in the greatest country in the world. I say this as a former teacher, one time seven-year's appointee to a state board of education and a lover of learning.

I have followed the national debates on education for a long time. I have come to the conclusion that what we have is a failure of will and determination. We live in a time where most people think and behave according to a selfish mode, even when we understand that we have forged this nation only out of the uplift and sharing of the many peoples and groups who have come to our shores. We seem to fear that the worst will happen educationally. Therefore, we are determined to take care of our own and put them on top. But what does it matter who is on top deck when the whole American ship is sinking? We have lost faith and trust in one another and in our future as a nation. If we keep going in this direction, we will imploded from within! Congressman Abe Lincoln

in 1858 said, "A House divided against itself cannot stand." (See the addendum #2) And the author of Proverbs said, "*For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them, but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.*" Proverbs 1:32-33. Disaster can best be averted by working together for a better America..

## II. Beware Of The False Teacher-James 3:1-12

James admonished his people that not many of them should become teacher because the teacher who imparts knowledge will be judged with a harsher judgement. Just because a person is articulate, has a smooth tongue, loud voice and can enthrall a crowd doesn't necessarily mean that person should be a teacher. There are many loud voices coming from all directions.

James recognized that the unbridled tongue is a dangerous weapon. There are many gangs, clandestine groups and folks on the extreme left and extreme right who are being indoctrinated today by charismatic leaders. I believe that it will be to our nations' detriment and their own destruction if their ideas prevail. James compared the unbridled tongue to a rudderless ship. Each ship as large as it was needed a steering mechanism called a rudder. The unbridled tongue is rudderless. It is ignited by the fires of hell. The unbridled tongue can set ablaze a forest fire of hatred and ill content, said the writer. It can not be tamed. It is "*a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*" James 3:8b. With its deceit it can praise God while cursing God's people. There seems to be a lot of cursing today. Beware of the unbridled tongue. Let us choose our children's teachers carefully.

## III. There Is Only One True Teacher-Mark 8:27-38

At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus, the Teacher asked his disciples questions that each and all of us must answer for ourselves. He wanted to know what people were saying about him and what his disciples thought of him. The correct answers to those questions constitute a matter of life and death. When it comes to our teachers we have to ask the same questions. Each student hopefully will sit at the feet of a called and gifted teacher. That teacher should be more than someone who imparts knowledge. That teacher should be a role model that the student can emulate and possibly grow to become like. Many times, the teacher will posit in the minds of her/his students questions that will set them on a great course to insightful learning and a stellar career.

Jesus asked his disciples, "*Who do people say that I am?*" Mark 8:27. The disciples gave the classic Jewish answers of the times, "*John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and others one of the prophets.*" Mark 8:28. The correct response to it will help to shape our lives for the good. Peter answered, "*You are the Messiah.*" Mark 8:29b. Jesus is the anointed one, the expected one, God in flesh, the savior of the world. He is the one that Adam and Eve were supposed to be like-made in the image of God, having the Spirit of God residing within them and living according to the commandments and precepts of the living God. That is the answer that every believer must confess. Living in faithfulness to that confession constitutes our salvation.

In addition, there are two things that the disciple of Jesus must understand and accept as well:

1. The first thing is that Jesus had to go through the crucible of death on a cross. God incarnate underwent the humiliation of an unjust trial and the pain of a horrible crucifixion. Jesus, the Christ really died and was buried in a borrowed grave. That was the cost that God paid for our salvation. And just as Jesus had to endure suffering and pain for our salvation, each student is required to be disciplined and to work hard for her/his education. One can not become really good without the hours, days and years it takes to becoming knowledgeable and competent.

2. The disciples of Jesus Christ had to understand a second thing. Maturity in Christ requires becoming like Jesus daily through obedience, prayer, meditation, study, worship, practice and out

reach. There is no other way. There are no short cuts. That is the cost of discipleship. So too with education. To become well educated costs a lot. Those who excel at education must be focused, disciplined and work hard. Such dedication will not only pay off eventually, but will become a joy to you and your loved ones as well.

Jesus used two sayings to further explain the cost of discipleship. He said, "For those who want to save their life will lose it." Mark 8:35. If you compromise your principles, do the wrong things and are not a true follower of the principles of Christ, there is no salvation for you. A parallel is true in education as well. In education, it implies that the person who seeks to take the short cut, shirks home work, cheats or does not do the class assignments will find himself/herself ill prepared to master the course. When the time comes for such persons to get a really, really good job and they do not qualify, it will be a sad time for all concerned.

In addition, it is vitally important for the student to refrain from becoming obstinate with parents, guardians and teachers when they push and prod you to take responsibility for your homework, chores and other obligations. That is the anvil on which your potential success is to be hammered out to a refined and successful career.

Jesus also said, "Those who are ashamed of me and my words... the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy angels." Mark 8: 38. There is a lot of pressure in many schools today for students to goof off, to appear to be cool and to fit in with wrong crowd. Such behavior is hell bent toward disappointment. Do not follow them. Do not let them influence you. Their end is self deception and failure. If they call you a nerd, just smile and continue to do the things that in the end will make you successful and your parent, guardians and teachers proud. In the final analysis who will be the uncool, the nerd and the goof off? Not you! For you, the world will be your playground. The sky will be you limit and the world will be a better place for the choices you make and the contributions that you will have to offer. For those who sacrifice their lives in disciplined study and preparation, will save their lives for a better future. Donald Trump once said, *"Treat them [nerds] as well as you can, they will probably be your boss one day."*

### "If"

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
' Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,  
if neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!

**By Rudyard Kipling**

### **Addendum**

#### **1. What each child needs for learning**

- A. Loving, and encouraging parents with an extended or surrogate family support system.**
- B. Physical, mental, psychological, sociological and educational readiness.**
- C. A strong school system from early childhood development through high school**
- D. A drug-free, gang-free, psychological harassment-free, educationally conducive atmosphere.**
- E. Encouraging friends and adults when things go wrong.**
- F. The freedom and motivation to be all that he or she can be.**

#### **2. A House Divided**

**"In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed **"A house divided against itself cannot stand."** I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the union to be dissolved-I do not expect the house to fall-but I do expect it will ceased to be divided. It will become as one thing or the other."**

**(Excerpts from Republican Congressman Abe Lincoln at the Illinois State Republican Convention, June 16, 1858). (His quote came from Mark 3:25; Luke 11:17 or Matthew 12:25).**