

Honoring Authority from All the Angles

12th Sun. after Pent. – 08/31/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Proverbs 25:2-10 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 2, **“It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.”**

v.6, **“Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great...”**

Introduction

✘ The Biblical book of Proverbs falls into the category of what is called “wisdom literature” because of the hundreds of short statements of advice and truths; the many bits of God’s wisdom that make up its contents.

➔ The majority of the book is written by King Solomon, David’s son, who you might remember prayed to God soon after he became King, in response to Yahweh’s invitation, “Ask what I shall give you” (1Kgs. 3:5). So Solomon prayed in 1 Kings 3:9, “Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern Your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this Your great people?”

➔ That prayer “pleased the Lord” (v.10) so that “God said to him, ‘Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you” (1 Kgs. 3:11-12).

✘ So, this text before us today is a part in God’s Word; the result of God’s wisdom imparted to King Solomon where he records for us especially today God’s wisdom regarding the concept of authority.

➔ I know, for many people, that very word is like a swear word. Just the idea of anyone having or exercising authority conjures up thoughts of abuse, corruption, rebellion, slavery, squashing a person’s independence or identity and more.

➔ I remember a time when you couldn’t take a drive around town without seeing at least one car with the bumper sticker that said, “Question Authority,” which at that time was a call not just to ask for an explanation so that you could understand those in authority, but it was a call to disobedience; a statement of disrespect and a warning that any attempt at expressing authority toward that person better be ready for a fight.

✘ Solomon urges us today though to understand this concept of authority from a different angle than that; not from the self-centered and defensive perspective that so many in our world want to have us think of authority, but as God designed and intended authority to be exercised and received by people, regardless of whether they are the one in a role of authority or the one in a position under authority.

I. Solomon writing to believers

✘ Many times Christians kind of pooh-pooh the book of Proverbs because they say that it is nothing but all Law; just a huge list of commands and rules and regulations from God that no one is able to live up to.

➔ But to say and think like that is to ignore the situation and the people to whom King Solomon was writing; to ignore Solomon’s own role at the time as well.

✘ You see, Solomon was crowned as the earthly king over the united kingdom of Israel; the chosen people of God. It’s only been a little over 400 years since they arrived in the Promised

Land and they are still basking in the glow of King David's 40-year reign, whom Paul quotes God as saying, "I have found...a man after My heart, who will do all My will" (Acts 13:22).

➔ That means that Solomon is writing here to an audience of believers; people that he can safely assume already know God well in both a Law and Gospel relationship. These are forgiven and justified followers of Yahweh who have a living relationship with Him in full faith; those who trust entirely in God's promise that they will be saved eternally through the work of the Messiah who is to come.

- ✘ That means that the people Solomon was writing to were no different folks than you and me; except for the direction of our faith. While they believed in the Savior to come, we believe just as fervently in the same Savior; Jesus who has come; who died and rose for our forgiveness; who has given us new life in baptism and who continues to teach us His truths revealed through Solomon all those years ago.

➔ So, yes, this text today is primarily God's Law, but it applies to us as God's people who know that we fall short in living up to His expectations every day. Yet we live each day in the Gospel grace of Jesus, who empowers us to seek His will in all that we think, and say and do right now.

II. Honoring Authority on Earth – 2 Angles

- ✘ When it comes to authority, there are different angles; different perspectives that come into play. We've already heard about the world's sin-soaked perspective that takes God's gift and perverts it into something that is terrible no matter which way you look at it.

➔ But we're not here to rehash all of those angles. You can just watch the news or listen to your friends and neighbors to get those incorrect and unfaithful views of authority.

- ✘ No, we're here to listen to and learn from God in His perfect and authoritative Word. And we see in verse two that Solomon draws a comparison and contrast between God and those authorities He has put in place here on earth. He uses kings and those in their courts and kingdoms as the example to learn from. That includes the example in verse 8 when he talks about bringing someone to "court", because at that time remember, the king was also the judge.

- ✘ Verse two begins, "It is the glory of God to conceal things." Now, all I'm going to say at this point is the application of that truth. God gets all the glory at all times precisely because He knows all things and we ... well, we don't. So, until we get to the point that we also are omniscient; knowing all things, then friends, we don't deserve the same glory as God. We'll look at that angle more in a bit.

➔ But the second half of verse two says, "the glory of kings is to search things out." This is the primary role that God has given to those in places of authority here on earth; for a king to investigate matters in his kingdom so that he can then discern accurately what actions need to be taken for the kingdom to run safely, smoothly and for the benefit of all in his kingdom.

- ✘ This is looking at authority from the angle of the king; from the one in authority. It includes, as verse three says, the fact that "the heart of kings is unsearchable". We're not to take that at the same level as knowing all things like God, but in comparison to those who are not in a role of authority here on earth.

➔ To coin a phrase from President Harry Truman, when it comes to who's in charge of making all of the hard and unpopular decisions, "the buck stops here" with the one who is in authority; whether that's a king, a president, an employer, a parent, a teacher, a member of law enforcement, a judge, etc.

➔ And that means it is his/her responsibility to investigate and know all of the facts and figures; all of the different views of the parties involved and every side of the opinions and policies that

have a bearing on the situation – in other words knowing more than anyone else in that place can know about the matter before handing down and putting in place the final decision.

→ This requires that person to honor the role that God has given to them; to honor and care about the people God has placed under their charge and the great importance they play in their administration, as verse five is getting at when it says, “take away the wicked from the presence of the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness.” You see, a leader is only as good and capable as the quality/purity of those whom he is leading. And a good leader cherishes, trusts, provides for and protects those under him who do their part faithfully.

✘ That leads us now to look at authority from the angle of the one who is under someone else’s authority. God’s Fourth Commandment is the foundation of our thinking here. When it says, “Honor your father and your mother” it’s speaking to every one of us not only as earthly children, but to all of us in any and all relationships where we are subject to someone else in authority.

→ The primary point, as Solomon puts it in front of us, is that we live with an attitude of honor and respect for the those who are in authority over us; understanding that they are in their position as God’s gift to us; for our well-being.

→ Verse six, “Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great.” It’s not your role; it’s not your place to know all the details that they know, so don’t expect them to tell you everything. Our role in that relationship is to trust that they know the big picture and to serve to the best of our ability in whatever part we have been given toward that bigger goal. Luther guides us in the meaning to the Fourth Commandment that “we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.” And that means even when you don’t always agree with them, as long as it is not against God’s Word.

→ Additionally, as verse 7 eludes to, and Jesus says in our Gospel reading today, having that humble attitude, we then acknowledge that we are not serving for recognition, but for God; knowing that in the end if not before that time, we will be lifted up to sit in His presence at the feast that He has prepared for us in eternity.

III. Authority between God & Believers – 2 Angles

✘ And that’s the perfect lead into the two final angles of us honoring God’s gift of authority. As we said before, these things we just finished talking about regarding our view of authority on earth; they are significantly backward – even viewed as foolishness, to this world in which we live today.

→ But that’s because the world refuses to acknowledge the foundation of all authority as we embrace it in God’s First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods.” As Yahweh says in Isaiah 45:21-22, “Who declared it of old? Was it not I, Yahweh? And there is no other god besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.” Eight more times God declares that truth in Scripture.

✘ But how are we to “be saved” as He calls us to be there, if He “conceals things” according to verse two in our text today? That’s exactly the kind of thinking in this world where we trip ourselves up, thinking that it’s our place to know all that God knows; that we are god instead of Him.

→ The Latin phrase for this is “Deus Absconditus” which means “God who hides Himself”. Isaiah 45:15 lays this truth before us, “Truly, you are a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, the Savior.” You see right there it shows that just because we can’t see God in His fullest glory right now, does not mean He isn’t our Savior!

- ➔ It's just that to us; the people of God who believe and trust in Him as Savior, God in His mercy, conceals His full wrath against our sin, because He has already unleashed it upon someone else.
- ✘ Paul explains it in further 1 Corinthians 1:22-25, "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom;" that's the unbelievers who want to know as much as God, "but we," Paul continues, "we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called (in faith), both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God" (that is the cross in the world's perspective) "is wiser than men, and the weakness of God" (that is Jesus on the cross) "is stronger than men."
- ➔ This, my friends, is God's authoritative love for you and me! In Jesus, God "...gave Himself up" for us, as Paul says in Ephesians 5:25-27, "that He might sanctify [us], having cleansed [us] by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she" (that is us in His Church) "might be holy and without blemish."
- ✘ So, what is our angle on this sacrificial authority now today as God's cleansed and redeemed people? We honor and worship Him alone! We adore and submit willingly, in full joy, to His authority over us. Yes, we fully embrace all Ten of His Commandments not only as they reveal our sin to us so that we can confess it in full repentance, but also we respect and submit to them, with His help of course, because we see them as God's loving direction to guide us in living our lives for Him in everything that we think, say and do as His beloved children.
- ➔ Yes, from this and every angle as believers, we honor God's gift of authority now, because we know it is how He reveals to us the true depth of His love for us. To Him be all the glory. Amen.