

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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SCHOOL OF WISDOM – Life Lessons from Proverbs
Wisdom from the Wild
Proverbs 30:24-28

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When our kids were young, we used to get annual passes to the Brevard Zoo. Em and the kids went all the time. Every now and then, I'd get to go with them. I love going to the zoo. I loved watching our kids watch the animals. At times, they would be in wonder. At times, I would be in wonder, too. Not just at the animals, but at the thought of God's creative power on display in the animal kingdom.

Did you know that the loudest animal in the world is a shrimp that's only a couple inches long? It's called the pistol shrimp. It snaps its claw shut so quickly that it creates a bubble that collapses on itself. It happens so quickly it produces a sonic blast louder than the sonic boom of a Concorde jet. For a split second, the imploding bubble generates temperatures of 4,400 C, or nearly as hot as the surface of the sun. That's how they kill their prey. I wonder how the first pistol shrimp figured that one out.

Did you know that when bees fly their wings generate a positive electrical charge? What's super cool about that is flowers tend to have a negative electrical charge. So, when a bee visits a flower, its body attracts the pollen. It just so happens that the interaction between a bee and a flower drains the flower of its electrical charge. Studies have shown that bees are less likely to visit a flower that has already been visited by another bee and the most likely cause is that the bee can sense the lack of an electrical charge from the flower. That keeps the bee from wasting time flying around to flowers that no longer have pollen. I wonder how the first bees figured that one out. I wonder what they did before they developed that little trick.

Did you know that millions of birds migrate twice each year to the exact same spots on earth? Some birds migrate during the day and use the path of the sun as a constant guide to get back home. You might know that the path of the sun changes throughout the year, so how do those birds keep it straight? Good question. Their brains are programmed to automatically calculate what time of year they are in and exactly where the sun should be based on the 23.5-degree tilt of the earth's axis. Some birds migrate at night. They find a specific star in the night sky (called the 'pole star'). Once they find that specific star, they use it to pinpoint the exact location of their nesting site.

Other birds don't rely on the sun or the 'pole star.' These birds have special crystals of magnetite in their necks. That allows them to automatically sense the magnetic field of the earth. They use that to determine the exact direction they should fly. I wonder how the birds figured that out. I wonder if they could navigate the Publix parking lot across the street. I wonder...

What I really wonder at is God – the One who made those amazing animals. If you have eyes to see it, His wisdom is on display in the world He has made. And believe it or not, that's the basis for our next study in the book of Proverbs. In our text, we find the wildest places in the world to see the wisdom of God.

Proverbs 30:24–28

Four things on earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise: 25 the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; 26 the rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs; 27 the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank; 28 the lizard you can take in your hands, yet it is in kings' palaces.

This chapter in Proverbs was written by a man named Agur. And one of the unique features of this chapter is that it includes a series of lists. Verses 18-19 list 4 things Agur says are too hard to understand. Verses 21-23 list 4 things that the world can't bear, or things we could do without. And it's important to understand how these lists fit into what Agur says at the beginning of this chapter.

Proverbs 30:5-6

5 Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. 6 Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

Wisdom comes from God. It's found most clearly in the truth of His Word, which is preserved for us in the Bible. That's the context for this morning's passage. Agur is saying that the wisdom of God's word proves true and all you have to do is look around the world and you'll see countless examples of God's wisdom in action. The author is highlighting the 4 animals in our text because they illustrate the wisdom of God's word. So, what are the lessons we learn from these wild animals?

Proverbs 30:24

Four things on earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise:

Each of these animals teaches us a unique lesson, but they all share something in common. They are all small. They all have weaknesses, limitations, and vulnerability. But their weakness is overcome by wisdom. That's the main idea that runs throughout this list and that gives us our big idea.

Big Idea: God's wisdom overcomes our weakness.

All of us are weak and small. All of us are facing challenges that threaten to overwhelm and undo us. All of us live in a broken world that often feels like it's breaking us. We are weak and small. And that can be paralyzing. To look out over your life – to see the challenges at work or to see a financial crisis looming over your family or to see a nation that's coming apart at the seams. It can be paralyzing to know how great your challenges are and realize how small you are in comparison.

But we don't have to be paralyzed. God has given us eternal wisdom in His word that overcomes our weakness so that we don't have to be overcome by our world.

That's what our text is all about. Agur gives us 4 animals that are small and weak and illustrate 4 different lessons about the wisdom of God that overcome our weakness.

LESSON #1 – THE WISDOM OF PREPARATION

Proverbs 30:25

the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer;

Ants store up food during the summer so they will be prepared for winter. They live today in a way that makes them ready for tomorrow. One of the weaknesses that plagues mankind is the weakness of procrastination. We tend to put off until tomorrow the things we should be doing today. We fall into the trap of thinking there will be another day that's better suited for doing what needs to be done.

So, we wait for another day. Another day to take care of our health. Another day to look for a job. Another day to start the project. Another day to save our money. Another day to tell someone how we really feel. Another day to say, "I'm sorry." Another day to say, "I forgive you." Another day to say, "I love you." Another day to follow Jesus and give your heart to Him.

The weakness of procrastination is overcome by the wisdom of preparation. It's foolish to wait for another day because the reality is there is no guarantee we will get another day. This week has pressed that truth home in a sobering way for all of us.

Yesterday, I preached the funeral of Jaime Ramsay. Jaime was a faithful servant at House of Hope and passed away at 58 years old. Friday, my aunt passed away. Last week, my mom was sitting by the bedside of my aunt with my cousin. With no warning, my cousin suffered a heart attack and ultimately went home to be with the Lord this week. Thursday was the 24th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, when nearly 3,000 people lost their lives and entered eternity. Wednesday, Charlie Kirk was speaking on the campus of Utah Valley University. In an act of pure evil, a gunman ended Charlie Kirk's life at 31 years of age.

Friends, it is foolish to wait for another day that may never come. Wisdom prepares for our future by doing today the things that are too important to wait. What have you been putting off that doesn't need to wait? Think through your life...start that savings plan...start living within a budget... pick up the phone and make the call to your loved one...tell someone you love them...the important things in life will never happen if we wait for another day to do them.

And nothing is more important than placing your faith and trust in Jesus. The day is coming when you and I will stand before God who will judge every man, woman, and child. And the determining factor for whether we are allowed to enter into the eternal joy of heaven is what we did with Jesus. Are you ready for eternity? Are you ready to stand before God? What are you waiting for? Today is the day of salvation and now is the only time you may have. Are you ready to stand before God?

The wisdom of God calls out to each of us. Prepare for your future today. That's the first lesson we learn in our text.

LESSON #2 – THE WISDOM OF POSITION

Proverbs 30:26

the rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs;

The rock badger is also called the Rock Hyrax. It weighs about 8 pounds and looks kind of like a rabbit.



You probably haven't seen a Rock Badger in person. According to modern scientists, it's closest living relatives are two other mammals you have probably seen. Can you guess them? The elephant and the manatee.

Rock Badgers live in parts of Africa and the Middle East. They are hunted by leopards, wild dogs, cobras, and birds of prey. Even though they are supposedly related to elephants, they are no match for any of their natural enemies. The only defense they have is positioning themselves in the rocks where they live. They are wise enough to find shelter in the rock.

And the wisdom of God says to learn that lesson from them. Be wise enough to know that you are living with a target on your back. Satan and his army of darkness are on the prowl, seeking to destroy and devour your life. And it is wise to acknowledge you are no match for the enemy. Not on your own. So, take shelter in the Rock.

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 62:5-7

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah

In the Old Testament, there are nearly 60 references to God as our only refuge.

Psalm 64

Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint; preserve my life from dread of the enemy. 2 Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the throng of evildoers, 3 who whet their tongues like swords, who aim bitter words like arrows, 4 shooting from ambush at the blameless, shooting at him suddenly and without fear. 5 They hold fast to their evil purpose; they talk of laying snares secretly, thinking, "Who can see them?" 6 They search out injustice, saying, "We have accomplished a diligent search." For the inward mind and heart of a man are deep. 7 But God shoots his arrow at them; they are wounded suddenly. 8 They are brought to ruin, with their own tongues turned against them; all who see them will wag their heads. 9 Then all mankind fears; they tell what God has brought about and ponder what he has done. 10 Let the righteous one rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in him! Let all the upright in heart exult!

When the people turn to God and take refuge in Him, rather than taking matters into their own hands, this world gets to see what only God can do. Verse 9 says, All mankind tells what God brings about...

Colossians 3:3

your life is hidden with Christ in God.

When you trust in Jesus, He becomes your refuge and strength. He becomes your Protector and Defender. So, where do you run in times of trouble? Where is the first place you go when fear rises up or anxiety rushes in? Where did you turn this past Wednesday when the tragic death of Charlie Kirk reminded us that we are in a battle against evil?

- Government offers no refuge.
- Politicians offer no refuge.
- Self-reliance and social movements offer no refuge.

Only Jesus is strong enough to protect you. Though Satan himself were to declare war on you and your family, Jesus is stronger. He already triumphed over Satan at the cross. So run to Jesus. Look to Jesus. Take refuge in Jesus. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run to Him and are saved.

Where do you turn in times of trial? There's only one Rock of Safety and His name is Jesus.

LESSON #3 – THE WISDOM OF PARTNERSHIP

Proverbs 30:27

the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank;

A single locust is not much of a threat. It can destroy a plant, but it won't disrupt a field, and it definitely can't devastate an entire crop. But a swarm of locusts is another story altogether. In 2019, a swarm of locusts joined together in the Arabian Peninsula and spread north to Iran, Pakistan, and India and south to East Africa. For the next 3 years, that section of the world was decimated. Tens of millions of people suffered food shortages. The economic impact is estimated to be close to \$9 billion.

A single locust isn't much of an impact. But a swarm of locusts can completely change entire nations. They embody the power of partnership.

And a similar dynamic exists for us as people. On our own, a single person may have a limited impact. But, when the people of God join together, united by the Spirit of God and a common mission, it can change entire nations...It can literally change the world.

And something that is powerful in this verse is that Agur brings out a significant detail about locusts – they have no king, and they still can transform the land. It begs the question: how much more could they accomplish if they DID have a King? Imagine they had a strong, wise, good King who was able to have a plan that took the power of a community living in unity and used it to further a great Kingdom agenda?

Christians, we have just such a King. And we have no other King but Jesus. What might happen if every believer in this nation...every believer in this room responded to this cultural moment by choosing to join together for the mission of Jesus.

Church, we could see this community transformed and not just in the next 5 years, it could happen faster than we could ever imagine. If we joined together as a community in unity, the power of Christ in us could turn this entire region upside down or right side up.

If every person in this room set aside our individual agendas and united around the mission of Christ, there's no limit to the impact that could have in our community. If each of us left this room today on mission with Jesus – showing the love of Christ and sharing the gospel of Christ to the people we encounter every day, this community would be changed for eternity. One encounter at a time. One act of kindness at a time. One conversation at a time.

If each one in this room today reached out to just one person in this community today, a thousand people in this community could be changed by the love of Jesus. And a thousand people each week would spread throughout this entire county in the coming year.

So, what would change about your week if you said “yes” to the agenda of King Jesus? “Yes” to the mission of Christ where you live, work, learn, and play? Jesus changes the world when His people live with unity as a community.

LESSON #4 – THE WISDOM OF PERSEVERANCE

Proverbs 30:28

the lizard you can take in your hands, yet it is in kings' palaces.

As a kid growing up in Ohio, I never quite understood the example of a lizard getting into a king's palace. But having lived in Florida for the past 20 years, our little lizards have driven this point home. You can't keep the lizards out. I find them in my office all the time. I see them in my closet at home. They are little but they are persistent. When they see the slightest crack, they come in whether you want them to or not. They never give up.

And the truth of the gospel is that Jesus has made a way for a bunch of lizards like us to come before the throne of the King.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The throne of God is available to us in prayer. You may be as small and weak as a little lizard, but you have access to the very throne of God. And, wonder of all wonders, He wants you to come to Him. He promises to give you mercy and grace in your time of need if you will simply come to Him over and over again in prayer.

But the power of God that's available to those who pray is only experienced by people who persist in prayer. So, pray. Pray and don't stop praying.

- Those of you who are praying for a spiritual breakthrough – don't give up. Persist in prayer.
- Those of you who are praying for you prodigals – don't give up. Persist in prayer.
- Those of you who are praying for your Ones, the people in your life who are close to you but far from God. Pray and don't give up. Persist in prayer.

- Those of you who are praying for revival to come to our nation – don't give up. Persist in prayer.

The throne of God Almighty is open to you. So, go to God in prayer and don't give up. The wisdom of God overcomes our weakness. The power of God is available to you today. Prepare for your future by trusting in Jesus. Position yourself in safety by running to Jesus. Partner together in the mission of Jesus. And persist in prayer in the name and power of Jesus. And the grace of Jesus will overcome your weakness today.