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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
October 12, 2014  
18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: James 3:13-18; Luke 10:38-42  
Hymns: 294; 366:1-5; 424; 283 (38:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Proverbs 16:1-9

The preparations of the heart belong to man,  
But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.  
2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,  
But the LORD weighs the spirits.  
3 Commit your works to the LORD,  
And your thoughts will be established.  
4 The LORD has made all for Himself,  
Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.  
5 Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD;  
Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.  
6 In mercy and truth  
Atonement is provided for iniquity;  
And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.  
7 When a man's ways please the LORD,  
He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.  
8 Better is a little with righteousness,  
Than vast revenues without justice.  
9 A man's heart plans his way,  
But the LORD directs his steps.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Wisdom for life.

There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Some of the smartest people I know lack wisdom. We see it frequently in the world. Intelligent people get so caught up in their own way of thinking that they are convinced they can't be wrong. They are sure, absolutely sure that they know what is best for their own lives and perhaps, even more than that that they are sure that they know what's best for everyone else the world.

God's thinking often takes us on a different track from the wise of this world. It takes a different track because God sees the big picture. He doesn't suffer from the same limitations that we mortals do. He isn't limited by the bounds of time and what will happen in the future. So then He doesn't fall victim to unforeseen consequences that men's plans often bring upon themselves and others. He doesn't possess the constraints of power and wisdom from which men often suffer. Also He sees beyond the temporal; and material goals that influence people's thinking far too much. He thinks in terms of our eternal good.

All that lies behind the words found in the book of Isaiah:

**Isaiah 55:7-8** "For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord.  
9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways,  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

God's way of thinking is always the right way of thinking. If only there was some way for us to comprehend the mind of God! Without doubt our minds cannot even begin to truly comprehend the mind of God, but God grant us insights into His thinking about the issues of life, the very same issues that we find ourselves contemplating for ourselves. **He grants us this in His Word, the divinely inspired Holy Scriptures.** He presents the Word to us to enable us to be --

## **THEME: Tapping into God's Way of Thinking --**

when considering our way in life.

Yes, we should be tapping into God's way of thinking –

### **I. When Making Plans for the Future.**

The proverbs that open our text address this matter of making plans.

**Proverbs 16:1-3** The preparations of the heart belong to man,  
But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,  
But the LORD weighs the spirits.

3 Commit your works to the LORD,  
And your thoughts will be established.

It is natural for us to make a plan, to see of vision of what we shall do. It is natural for us to be ambitious and set high and lofty goals. However, sometimes in making these plans we may forget about the Lord and what He has to say. Sometimes when people make plans they very deliberately leave God out of their thinking. Sometimes when people make plans they are willing to do whatever is necessary for their plan to be successful, and they don't want the Lord to be a part of their plan. All this plotting and conniving that goes on in the mind of man does not actually determine if the plan shall be fulfilled, or if the plan will serve as a blessing. The Lord knows what's in the heart. The Lord is in control, and I mean He IS in control. It is good for us to recall the words of the Apostle James.

**James 4:13-16** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

So it becomes apparent that tapping into the thinking of God is actually very important. If we commit our works to the Lord, that is if we seek His blessing and submit to His revealed will, and

endeavor to glorify His name in what we do, then we may be assured that the Lord will prosper the works of our hands. This is exactly where the psalmist leads us in Psalm 90 when he considers the frailty of our mortal existence.

**Psalm 90: 16-17** Let Your work appear to Your servants,  
And Your glory to their children.

17 And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,  
And establish the work of our hands for us;  
Yes, establish the work of our hands.

For this to happen, that we have the Lord's blessing upon us in all that we do, we need to tap into the Lord's thinking --

## **II. When Seeking Righteousness.**

Again we find these proverbs before us revealing the wisdom of God in this matter.

**Proverbs 16:4-6** The LORD has made all for Himself,  
Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.

5 Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD;  
Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.

6 In mercy and truth

Atonement is provided for iniquity;

And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.

The Lord is above all. He rules over the entire universe for the advancement of His good and gracious will. God will bring judgment upon the wicked, the fact that they are not struck down by a bolt of lightning right now when they are in the act of sinning is not a testament to God's weakness, but rather to His patience and gracious will to save. The proud, the impenitent, those who do not care about their sin may think they are safe from God's vengeance, but divine justice shall prevail. The world's thinking that our sins will not condemn us, or the idea that we can somehow make up for our indiscretions, or the idea that God wouldn't damn someone for the minor and rare wrongs in my life when there are so many others who do so much worse, all of that is the flawed thinking of man. In fact it is the kind of thinking that doesn't even convince one's own conscience, for there is no peace of mind or heart in

such thinking about righteousness. We have David's experience recorded for us in the Psalms that shows the need to tap into God's way of thinking about righteousness.

**Psalm 32:1-6** 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah 6 For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found."

Our proverb stated God's plan for righteousness that **"In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity."** In His mercy God loved the world and sent His Son into the world to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. That is the truth. That is the thinking of God about righteousness. It is the righteousness of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ that avails before God. Only Jesus fulfilled the law's demands. Only Jesus could provide the propitiating sacrifice to pay for our sins. Only Jesus could establish that peace with God that surpasses all understanding and that comes to us through faith in Him, and His cross, and His resurrection. So then, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness"** (1 John 1:9).

The Prophet Isaiah encourages all people to tap into the Lord's way of thinking about righteousness. We read in –

**Isaiah 55:6-7** "Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon."

When we have this peace then we are ready to tap into god's way of thinking –

### **III. When Pursuing Success.**

How do we define success? Many in the world define it in terms of money or power and influence or fame. Big house, new car, best schools for one's children, having people acknowledge you as being successful, that is all about success in the world's way of thinking. All too often that becomes our way of thinking too. The Lord has a different way of thinking about success.

**Proverbs 16: 7-8** When a man's ways please the LORD,  
He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.  
8 Better is a little with righteousness,  
Than vast revenues without justice.

Let's start with the idea that success first means striving to please the Lord. The Pharisees had that at the forefront of their minds. They literally hung miniature scrolls of the commandments in front of their eyes. They were as careful as careful could be to observe every detail of the law of God. And yet, though they were admired by many in society, they failed to please the Lord. Jesus warned His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees. They put their trust in themselves and in their own spiritual merit. They did not put their trust in Christ for life and salvation, even though the whole point of the law they were so assiduous about observing was to direct people to God and His Christ for righteousness. When we consider God's thinking about righteousness **FAITH IN CHRIST** is the key.

**Hebrews 11:6** But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

What is the great reward that the Lord promises to those who possess righteousness by faith? It is PEACE! First, peace with God, and then peace even with our enemies. Many even fail to consider that when thinking about success. In the world those who do strive for peace never find it. All too often that is because they still pursue riches in natural resources and money and in goods that do not last.

Again we are blessed if we but tap into God's way of thinking. **"Better is a little with righteousness, than vast revenues without justice."** Who thinks that way? We hear people in the world say, "I've been poor and I've been rich and I can tell you rich is a lot better." We tend to agree, at least our flesh does. What does the Apostle Paul say?

**Philippians 4:11-13** I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

It is better to have Christ. He sustains us in life. He provides peace and joy that is not dependent upon the trifles of this world. He provides peace and joy that lasts into eternity. It is there for us if we but by faith tap into the Lord's way of thinking.

Conclusion: **"A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."**

So often we are focused on the temporary, this material world with our material goals and our aspirations, aspirations which we see as being as big as life itself. We may even think that we are reaching for the stars with our plans. However the Lord has bigger and far more permanent plans for us and our lives. He plans to have us with Him in heaven above for all eternity. That's the path He directs for our steps. For this we must be eternally grateful, even though we may indeed experience some greater or lesser degree of frustration now. God is not dealing with us in a fickle cavalier manner, dictating whatever whim He may have as if we were His play thing by which He amuses Himself. No, not at all. He directs our footsteps that we may walk the way to heaven. He cares for us in all our ways.

**TLH 518:1** "If thou but suffer God to guide thee, and hope in Him through all thy days, He'll give thee strength whate'er betide thee, and bear thee through the evil day. Who trusts in God's unchanging love Build's on the rock that naught can move."

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.