

V.O.C. – October 2018

October 21, 2018: Our heart and God! [Prov. 21:2]

Dear Listeners,

This month we're reflecting on some of the *proverbs* in the book of Solomon by that name: Proverbs. These *proverbs* aren't always easy to know in its meaning, its purpose, and message. The proverb itself must be carefully considered in order to understand its wisdom and its purpose in God's Holy Word. The words as such may seem simple and straightforward, yet the *truth* that's expressed in it is revealing, sobering, humbling, and yet liberating as well. We're so used to living our life and going our way, judging ourselves according to our own opinion, feelings. "Follow your heart," has become a popular platitude, which has come to mean "do whatever you feel is right, do whatever you think is right, do whatever you desire;" follow your dreams, pursue your passions, do what makes you happy. That seems to be the common approach in life: our ways are weighed by our own hearts.

In the book of Proverbs, chapter 21:2, we read this word of *wisdom*: "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart." That's the opposite of what this common approach to life has become: our ways are *weighed* by our *own* hearts. No, says Solomon; no, says God's Word, "the LORD weighs the heart." As you know, a man can be very short-sighted because he starts out with himself. He makes his choices on the basis of his own considerations and thoughts. He doesn't look at the greater picture but judges by what he sees. That often leads to *derailments*, as we can see in many a person's life. Some people think the world of themselves, are very important in their own eyes, and proud, and so they think *they* can only be right and everyone else is wrong. It clearly leads to *disaster* in his life.

There are other people who follow the *way* to *riches*. They want to get rich as quickly as possible, and they use some crooked means to achieve it. It's a *wrong* way, a way of self-deception and fraud. They *also* start with themselves, design their *own* ways, and don't care about others, least of all about God. Of course they don't think of *God* and what *He* thinks of their ways, with the result that such a life becomes very *godless* in the long run. That's the same with people who *relativize* everything. Knowing what is right or wrong is a matter of *personal experience*. Whatever is right for *your* life or works best for *you* is the only truth you can know. There is no moral truth, they say, and whatever moral truth there may be is very *relative*. Depending on culture and circumstances, what's right in *your* eyes may not be what's right in *my* eyes. This view of life is often called *moral relativism*; morality is a matter of opinion (some people like chocolate, others like vanilla). Again, this too is a *useless* and *hopeless way* of life!

*Another scenario*, dear listeners, which you might recognize in today's moral climate and culture, is the lack of care and compassion about others. When someone calls for your help, you close your ears because it won't touch you. That's also very dangerous, the proverbs of Solomon show us, because you do yourself a disfavor; yes, you'll be hurting yourself. When you end up in trouble, the other won't hear you either nor help you. He will turn against you and leave you in your trouble, as you left him in his misery when he called upon you for help. And *why* is it that way? Well, because people live for *themselves*, to enjoy themselves, to be *self-fulfilled*, seeking to satisfy their *own* desires. And the best way to find yourself is by looking *within yourself*. In our increasingly *self-centered* society, we are increasingly grounding

our morality (how we ought to live) in our own heart. Hence, as the proverb puts it, “Every man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.”

What does it mean, however, dear listener, that “the LORD weighs the heart.” Well, against the background of man’s self-centered and egotistical self-fulfilling way, the proverb points at the *Word of God*. It highlights the fact that we must see our *ways* in our *relationship* with *God*. In my previous meditations I already pointed out and explained that the name *LORD* denotes a *relationship*. God is the *LORD*, the God who is there for His people and who will be there for them always. When you see your life in the light of this relationship with God you will come to see your thoughts and desires, your selfishness and egoism, as *sinful*. Man in and of himself indeed, does *not* have a *norm*, a standard, a moral law; hence he lives as *he* pleases. That’s not right! No one can make a proper choice or decision without *God* and without His norms and values, His commandments. That’s the clear *contrast* in this proverb!

Man, dear listener, may be inclined to judge things for himself and by his *own* desires and feelings; the *LORD* God, however, *tests the heart*. God works differently: He looks at the *centre* of our life, our *heart*, which is the totality of our inner self. It includes not merely emotions, but personality, intellect, desires and will; the *heart* not only feels, it wants, it thinks, it reasons. Then we should realize that *God* weighs these thoughts and desires; *He* tests our heart and mind. That’s a totally different approach than man’s! In the book of Proverbs there is another word of wisdom saying something similar: “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit.” What’s important is *the state of one’s mind*, the condition of one’s heart, and what criteria does a man use to determine his ways! Does he consider what the *LORD* wants him to do? That’s how it is in a relationship, right? What does the *other* think of this!

In spite of what man’s inclination may be, dear listeners, or what the world says about this, our ways are evaluated by the way of the LORD. As Christians we affirm that our way should be that of the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*. It’s not us but God who is the standard for our life, who determines what’s right or wrong. Hence, we call the *Lord Jesus* the *righteous* one, and those who believe in Jesus Christ are called *righteous* too. The root of the word ‘*righteous*,’ as you will surmise, is the word ‘right!’ The ways of the righteous are *right* by *God’s* standards. Of course, that doesn’t mean that they are perfect and without sin completely. When we seek our life *outside* of ourselves in *Jesus Christ*, the Righteous one, we seek to honour and obey *God’s* will and follow *God’s* way, the way *Jesus* did. Thus there are *two* ways of life: the way of the *righteous* and the way of the *godless*. The *righteous* will rejoice in a way that pleases *God* in thankfulness for the salvation he has by faith in Christ. The *godless* one may not care or even be aware that the LORD weighs the heart, neither does he realize that his ways are treacherous, dangerous and destructive. It’s therefore very important to *know* and remember that the LORD weighs the heart and that we should seek the way in Jesus Christ! As Voice of the Church we listen to *Him* to know the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*!