

Sermon Summary:

Title: A Wise Person Seeks a Reward (Part 2)

Text: Proverbs 11:31 (NKJV)

If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth,
How much more the ungodly and the sinner.

Series: Living Well in a Sinful World

Summary: God has written the law of sowing and reaping into the way this world works, and personally sees to it that both righteousness and evil receive their just reward, both in this life and the next.

Intro:

“What goes around comes around.” “Karma.” “People get what is coming to them” Sweet justice. These are common ideas throughout the world because, by and large, people have observed the natural truth of them. It is true because God has written this law into human interaction, the wisdom that this world lives by, and enforces it by his own direct involvement in the affairs of men.

Do you believe you get out of life what you put into life? That if you are kind to others, other will be kind to you? Do you believe the little unnoticed kindnesses and good deeds you do are noticed by God and repaid? Do you believe that those who plan evil- even if they get away with it, will pay for it in some way?

Gospel is grace - but we can fall into mistake of thinking that our actions don't matter, that we just enter into this neutral zone where nothing adds up and nothing counts. That is not the Bible's teaching.

Each day and in the smallest ways, we should live to reap a harvest of righteousness in this life and the next.

James = the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

Paul tells the Galatians = Do not be deceived: God is not to be mocked. Whatever a man sows, he will reap in return. The one who sows to please his flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; but the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Exposition:

Evil sets its own trap

Proverbs 11:5 (NKJV)

The righteousness of the blameless will direct his way aright,
But the wicked will fall by his own wickedness.

Proverbs 11:6 (NKJV)

The righteousness of the upright will deliver them,
But the unfaithful will be caught by their lust.

Proverbs 26:27 (NKJV)

Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,
And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.

God allows evil to be its own punishment in this life, and will pour out his wrath upon it in the next. Wicked Haman was hung on his own gallows. Those who conspired against Daniel were devoured by the lions that they tried to murder him with.

Proverbs 28:10 (NKJV)

Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way,
He himself will fall into his own pit;
But the blameless will inherit good.

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. - Mt 5:19

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. -Mk 9:42.

those who tempt or guide the upright person into sin dig their pit of guilt before they Lord even deeper as the Lord himself has said.

Proverbs 29:6 (NKJV)

By transgression an evil man is snared,
But the righteous sings and rejoices.

Those who delight in sin fancy themselves free to live and indulge as they please. What they will find though is that the very sin they cherish becomes both a chain and a trap.

The one who is as free and happy as a song bird is the one who flies free from the snares of evil.

Proverbs 13:21 (NKJV)

Evil pursues sinners,
But to the righteous, good shall be repaid.

Proverbs 13:6 (NKJV)

Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless,
But wickedness overthrows the sinner.

Paul speaks of the breastplate of righteousness. The one who lives to please God and does not stray from his way avoids many dangers, and God himself watches over the righteous so that they do not suffer any evil. So righteousness because like an active guard that protects the one who possesses it.

Evil is the opposite. Evil is not just a character trait of those who pervert the Lord's ways, but it is like an active and alive thing which turns on the sinner to become their own undoing.

The wicked seek to be the masters of their own fate and the master of others, and they find themselves to be the cruelly enslaved by the very force which they sought to use as a weapon against others.

God leaves them exposed to the principalities and powers which are whipped into a fury against humanity and delight in tormenting them. Like rabid dogs, the demonic realms hound after those who are not sheltered by God.

Proverbs 28:1 (NKJV)

The wicked flee when no one pursues,
But the righteous are bold as a lion.

Evil designs lead to paranoia, innocence to confidence

Many of the proverbs speak of the stability of the righteous life and the instability of the wicked. The idea is that the wicked are easily overthrown while the righteous dwell in a strong defense. This proverb speaks somewhat in that vein with the idea that not only will the wicked not stand their ground against assault, but will fall back even when there is no attacker.

However, it speaks more than just the weakness of their position, but also to their state of mind. The wicked person's mind is always filled up with plots of evil, traps, and harm to others. As a result their mind naturally becomes paranoid. The righteous, however, trust others and think thoughts of goodwill towards them, and it becomes their expectation to receive that from others. Not in the way of naïvety, but in confidence and peace which leads to boldness.

God intervenes in this life to deliver his people and warn/punish the wicked

Proverbs 12:21 (ESV)

No ill befalls the righteous,
but the wicked are filled with trouble.

Proverbs 11:8 (NKJV)

The righteous is delivered from trouble,
And it comes to the wicked instead.

Proverbs 11:31 (NKJV)

If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth,
How much more the ungodly and the sinner.

Though all will be finally recompensed in the final judgment, God has not abandoned this world to chaos, but works for the blessing of the righteous and the cursing of the wicked while they breath upon the earth.

Proverbs 11:27 (NKJV)

He who earnestly seeks good finds favor,
But trouble will come to him who seeks evil.

Favor vs. trouble - You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. The Lord judges the heart, and what he looks for his humility and sincerity in the fear of Him. Those who seek good, not half-heartedly, or when convenient, or with mere lip-service, but earnestly, these find the favor of God.

What can be more blessed than the favor of God? To have the all wise, all good, all powerful, Creator of the Universe disposed to bring you good and abundant blessing is the most happy life condition!

Whoever seeks evil will surely find it.

Proverbs 14:14 (NKJV)

The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways,
But a good man will be satisfied from above.

Punishment as natural consequence, reward as divine intervention. Contrast of “own ways” and “above.”

Not only is their retribution against the wicked of this world who have never bowed the knee to God, there is also warning here to the one who has set his foot on the good way and wandered from it. How much worse for him who has known his master’s business but not fulfilled it?! Yet God will maintain his divine favor on those who are right with him. He will personally see that their life is filled with abundance.

Proverbs 24:15-16 (NKJV)

Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous;
Do not plunder his resting place;
For a righteous man may fall seven times
And rise again,
But the wicked shall fall by calamity.

Never the righteous man forsaken. God takes it upon himself to preserve the life and dwelling of the righteous so that they seem to have some secret reserve. Watch them fall again and again, they will recover. Set your heart against them in an evil plot, you cannot get to their source of resurgence - it is from beyond this world. Their root cannot be dug up. Who can snatch them from the omnipotent hand which shelters them?

Proverbs 21:12 (NKJV)

The righteous God wisely considers the house of the wicked,
Overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness.

Considers the house - He is the Judge of the earth who carefully measures the life of the wicked. He does not judge by passionate over-reaction as we are so prone to. Neither is he swayed by bribes, or over-lenient because of his own culpability.

Proverbs 11:21 (NKJV)

Though they join forces, the wicked will not go unpunished;
But the posterity of the righteous will be delivered.

Why do the nations rage? The one who sits enthroned in heaven will laugh and hold them in derision. Should the whole world join in unbroken unity along with all the legions of hell, could they even turn the beasts of the earth to their will and bring such an army of all breath and spirit against the Creator, would the Lord have cause to tremble?! They continue to exist at his will and could in but a moment cease to be. All “being” is dependent upon his self-existence. He has set the boundaries of the seas and said thus far you shall come and no further.

Therefore, judgement is certain for nothing can prevent it. The character of the Judge is unchanging and the authority of the Judge is unchallengeable.

Neither does a single righteous person who fears the Lord have anything to fear though all the world be set against them, those chained in the pit unloosed, and the powers of the air aligned against them for evil. If The Almighty One has taken up their defense, what can assail them?

Better still, should one petty soldier in the armies of evil have a change of heart and desire to serve the Lord, though they be deep in enemy territory and hated as a traitor, cannot the Lord storm every gate of the foe and deliver his newborn child from the darkest prison of hell? Nay, he need not even go himself, but may send the least child of his Kingdom to accomplish his errand uncontested.

Such is God’s devotion to those who fear him that all this great power is set up not only to their own defense, but to the defense of their children as well.

Proverbs 13:9 (NKJV)

The light of the righteous rejoices,
But the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

This idea of rejoices gives the picture of waxes strong. As a light seems to delight in its own power over darkness and grows ever more steady as the eyes adjust and pushes back every shadow as its intensity increases in defiance of the dark which would rush in if it were snuffed out. However, the lamp of the wicked is a sickly light which casts distorted hue, flickering shadows of uncertainty and will not endure the night. It will be blown out by a gust of wind, an evil hand, or by the justice of God who is true Light of Light and will suffer no counterfeit.

The “lamp” is that flicker of life which has come from God and is his to snuff out of those who live in rebellion to him.

Proverbs 17:13 (ESV)

If anyone returns evil for good,
evil will not depart from his house.

What treachery and injustice it is when someone takes a kind deed done towards them and uses it as an opportunity to launch an evil attack. God would have us be good towards our enemies, but even the world's evil standard teaches that good should be repaid for good and they will turn in hatred towards all those who do not repay kindness in kind. Therefore, an especial curse is laid upon them in this proverb. It is a statement of absolute trust that God will avenge all evil, and that greater provocation will bring down greater and enduring condemnation.

Proverbs 28:17 (NKJV)

A man burdened with bloodshed will flee into a pit;
Let no one help him.

Guilt pursues the perpetrator until it is satisfied. No proverb is the whole story on a matter, and surely there is also a time for mercy and restoration. Yet it is folly to intervene in the Lord's justice. Preventing the execution of justice is a new injustice. Besides, how futile it is to try and prevent the Lord's sovereign decree. In the end, justice will be perfect because nobody is more powerful than the Judge who sees to it. Many have thought themselves shrewd to have carried out some evil with craft and cunning so that none can discover it. The elders may have to wash their hands and testify that they do not know who has done it (), but the Lord has seen it, and he will avenge.

Conclusion:

A glorious truth: God sows mercy in our field!

The Lord *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.