

## PROVERBS 22: Selected Verses

<sup>1</sup>A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,  
and favour is better than silver or gold.

<sup>2</sup> The rich and the poor have this in common:  
the Lord is the maker of them all.

<sup>6</sup> Train children in the right way,  
and when old, they will not stray.

<sup>8</sup> Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,  
and the rod of anger will fail.

<sup>24</sup> Make no friends with those given to anger,  
and do not associate with hotheads,  
<sup>25</sup> or you may learn their ways  
and entangle yourself in a snare.

<sup>9</sup> Those who are generous are blessed,  
for they share their bread with the poor.

<sup>16</sup> Oppressing the poor in order to enrich oneself,  
and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss.

<sup>22</sup> Do not rob the poor because they are poor,  
or crush the afflicted at the gate;  
<sup>23</sup> for the Lord pleads their cause  
and despoils of life those who despoil them.

1 – Reputation matters. Integrity matters. Not that we should be swayed by what people think of us. But if they trust us because of our integrity and deal with us because they trust we care, are honest but also kind, then that has value far greater than anything material. And yet, who values “a good name” above any silver or gold in our world? We need to seek out those who do and build our relationships and dealings with those who do.

2 – This proverb speaks truth in multiple ways. What we become or how we are measured by the world’s standards is not the measure of our humanity and worth as God has made us. This should humble those who are rich and think they own the world. It should also raise up those who are poor in their own eyes. We are all human in the end, whether we live in mansions or on the street somewhere. But are we ourselves guilty of seeing and treating people differently because of their status and means in the world? Have the world’s values shaped our attitudes too in some ways?

6 – This proverb is well-known in the western world and has been quoted often. But there are no guarantees when it comes to raising children. Before I had children of my own I was quick to

make judgements of parents and their child-rearing. After I had my own I had many occasions where I was humbled. Not that my children are not wonderful human beings. But we discover very quickly how imperfect we are and how for all our best intentions we are not always at our best.

Besides this, our children are also not machines. Things happen in life, life is experienced in many ways, and personalities, genetics and circumstances activate all kinds of responses and patterns in the living of life. Certainly, attentive, loving and disciplined child-rearing will make a huge difference for how our children will grow to become as adults. But I have lots of compassion for parents who have done their best and yet experience much pain in their relationship with their children as adults. Also, when our children are in pain, we too, are in pain. Even as we can want to choose differently for them as they grow, there comes a time where they have to make their own choices leaving us with the single choice of continuing to love them dearly even as we may not agree or support the choices they make. What do you think?

8,24,25 – Like proverbs we have encountered before, these touch on the dangers of uncontrolled anger and how it is not only destructive but contributes to injustice. Think about how anger in people is manipulated by politicians in our world as a justification for mean-spiritedness and harsh policies that encourage war, racism, sexism and prejudice against differences in people. Think about all the hate speech out there and the perverse gratification people get in insulting others and putting them down. We live in dangerous times, and it is important for us not to get swept up in all the anger and grievance so that our spirits are not poisoned toward unkindness, lack of grace and openness to understanding and empathy. What do you think?

9,16,22,23 – Like proverbs we have also encountered before, these touch on the themes of poverty and wealth and how we treat people in either category. Generosity is key here. Giving to those in need generates a much higher return of a spiritual nature than any material gain that could be had by hoarding and growing our own bank account. How much do we share what we have? How much do we give? How central to the meaning of our lives and our service in Christ's name is about giving and sharing what we have?

But these proverbs also point to the evils of making money in a way that impoverishes others. How does our way of life affect other people and our mother earth? Does our own comfort and convenience come at the cost of the welfare of other life equally precious and sacred to God? These are challenging questions, but also essential questions for us to ponder if we are to grow our spiritual nature before God and within ourselves. What do you think?

PRAYER: Thank you, O God, for material blessings in our lives. May we share what we have as a fitting expression of thanksgiving to you. Thank you, O God, for listening to our grievances

and griefs. Protect us from anger that becomes mean-spirited and the kind of anger that fails to see people through the eyes of grace in search of understanding rather than contempt and condemnation. Thank you, O God, for wisdom, guidance and patience when it comes to our children and the children of others, but also the joy of seeing them grow and flourish. May we learn from children as much as we may teach them. Carry us with your compassion whenever we blame ourselves for failing our children or grieve the brokenness in our relationship with them. Thank you, O God, for making us all equally precious in your sight. May we see others as you see them whatever their station or accomplishments in life. And thank you, O God, for inspiring us to value our integrity and integrity in others as more important than anything else when it comes to our dealings and relations in the world. Grant us your higher wisdom and the courage and will to live it. In Jesus' name; Amen.