**Sermon-Story: Pay Attention**

*A narrative reflection on Proverbs 8:1–4, 22–31*

Her name was **Maya**.
She was thirty-two years old and she lived in a small but stylish apartment above a bakery.

Her life was packed: she often had early meetings, and worked till 7 or 8 at night

She stayed up late answering emails,

Went to the gym three days a week, ordered in meals and groceries,

 and tried to keep up with the stream of text threads that were never quite resolved.

She was sharp. Capable and Unsettled.

There had been a time—maybe in college—when she felt connected to something deeper.

But now, even in church, it was harder to feel anything.

 She tried yoga. She tried meditation, but the silence was always interrupted by the chatter in her mind

One Sunday evening, she was scrolling absently on her phone,a line from a poem stopped her in mid-swipe.

“Instructions for living a life:
Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.” Mary Oliver

She exhaled. She didn’t know why those words made her eyes sting, but they did.

She took a screenshot and made it her phone’s lock screen.

A few days later, was running late for work and halfway through a mediocre oat latte,

Maya put in her earbuds and resumed listening to a podcast by her favourite ‘God Guy’ as she called him.

The episode was on **Proverbs 8**, and Tim was talking about

*Lady Wisdom*—not as a concept, but as a person. A voice.

“Proverbs 8 isn’t just about morality,” Tim said.

“It’s about how the universe was designed to work. Lady Wisdom was there with God in the beginning. She’s calling out. Still. Right now. To everyone. To *you*.”

Maya crossed the street and heard him say something else that stuck:

“Wisdom is a way of being in the world. It’s not about mastering control—it’s about how to live well in the flow of God’s creation.

 But you need to choose. There’s always a choice.” He said.

Then she remembered a familiar verse she hadn’t thought of in years:

*“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps”* (Prov. 16:9).

Maya stopped walking.

She looked around and saw the city as if for the first time. People coming and going, hurrying here and there in a dizzying dance, traffic roared, cyclists whizzed by……

 And then she saw her.

 **An older woman in a green shawl**, standing beside a lamppost, looking directly at her with eyes that burned not fiercely, but with something ancient and tender.

Maya felt drawn to her; she hesitated, then approached.

“Do I know you?” she asked.

The woman tilted her head. “You know my voice.”

Her voice was calm and strong, like river water that had known both flood and drought.

“You’ve been planning a life,” she said, “a good one. But you’ve forgotten how to listen.”

“Who are you?” Maya whispered.

“I am Wisdom. I was with God before the foundations of the world. I watched stars form and snowflakes land. I rejoiced in creation, and I still rejoice….especially when people choose life.”

Maya blinked. “What do you mean—choose life?”

Wisdom reached out and placed her hand on Maya’s arm.

 “There are always two ways, Maya. One leads to life—the kind that overflows, nourishes, sustains. The other looks good for a while, but it withers. And then it hollows you out.”

Maya thought of her calendar. Her constant hustling. The growing numbness she could not quite name.

“But I’ve worked so hard. I have goals. I have A five-year plan.”

Wisdom smiled gently.

“Plans aren’t the problem. Attachment is. You cling to your vision as if it is your salvation. Remember the proverb? *‘In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.’*

She looked straight into my eyes and said

“Let your steps be open to grace.”

She continued:

“Wisdom isn’t about certainty.

 It’s about attunement ….to God, …to creation, ..to the people in front of you. Every choice you make matters. Every word you speak echoes in the universe.”

Maya looked down. “But do all these little things really matter?”

The woman nodded.

“Yes. Every act of kindness. Every moment of honesty. Every time you choose mercy instead of judgment….these are not wasted

 God notices the nuances. You are not being measured by perfection

You are being invited into a relationship.”

Then she added:

If you want to live a meaningful life, begin by paying attention.
Pay attention to beauty, to pain, to the tug in your soul.

See your creator's world around you, feel the breadth and depth of everything.

Let yourself be astonished.

And when the time comes, *tell someone about it*.”

A breeze moved past. Maya blinked and the woman was gone.

That evening, Maya took a different way home.

No GPS. No podcast. She just walked.

 She noticed an old man sitting alone on a stoop, and she waved.

She paused to smell the honeysuckle in someone’s front yard

 She looked up and said aloud, “Thank you.”

She didn’t know who she was talking to. Yet maybe she did.

That night, she wrote in her journal:

I heard a voice today, she said,

“There is more than one way……

I’ve been clinging to my plans like they were lifelines. Always moving so fast, always focused elsewhere, desperate to keep up, yet always behind….
But today I learned that Wisdom doesn’t scream.
She waits. She watches. She calls from everywhere.
And everything I say, every choice I make, matters.

The path of Lady Wisdom’s way is narrow, but it’s real.
I’m learning to walk it. One small act at a time.”

I see that Wisdom doesn’t promise me certainty.

she trains me to be discerning,

 she forms my imagination.

As Maya put her journal away, she glanced at her phone and saw Mary Oliver's words

“Instructions for living a life:
Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.” —Mary Oliver²

She smiled and went to sleep.

Lady Wisdom is everywhere, and always right here…. She speaks

‘To you, O people, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind!’

Wisdom is by God’s side, filled with delight, day after day, rejoicing in creation and delighting in us!

She is still at the crossroads,

In the microcosm of your day, where small choices are made

She walks with us as we determine which path we will take
the way of death or the way of life……… So

**Pay attention**.
To the details, to the people. To the longings.
**Be astonished.**
by God in the mountains and in the nuances of your day
**Tell about it.**
Because someone else is at a crossroads, too.

May the Wisdom who danced with God at the beginning,
Who speaks through poets and prophets,
Who lives as the Spirit of Truth in us today
Guide your steps in grace.

**Amen.**