

THE SUNDAY FOCUS

Weekly Worship from Gladsmuir & Longniddry Parish Churches

Issue 328

5th July 2026

Online at www.longniddrychurch.org.uk

Today's Bible reading

Proverbs 2:1-15 ("The Value of Wisdom")

My child, if you accept my words and treasure up my commandments within you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; if you indeed cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding; if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures— then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly, guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; prudence will watch over you; and understanding will guard you. It will save you from the way of evil, from those who speak perversely, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil; those whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways. Amen. (NRSV)

Today's hymns

O worship the King, all glorious above (CH127)

Christ is our light! (CH336)

Lord, for the years (CH159)

A little bit of summertime fun this week, as we reflect on a much-loved nearby island, think about pirates and consider how these might relate to the pursuit of God's Wisdom.

One of the things I love to do with visitors who come to stay from far afield (like our friends Bruce and Janet who have just visited from Oregon in the United States) is to ask them: "Would you like to see Treasure Island?" Older people reply: "Well, I saw it a very long time ago. When was it made ... 1950?" Younger people, meanwhile, might say with a note of excitement: "Oh yes, *Muppet Treasure Island* was one of my favourite DVDs."

A fun fact for you: as every die-hard muppet fan will surely be aware, *Muppet Treasure Island* is one of the very few Hollywood blockbusters to mention the little East Lothian community called ... Longniddry. (Oh, yes.) To those of you who may be unfamiliar with this great cinematic moment, let me quote it, word for word, thus to shed a timely beam of enlightenment upon the great darkness of ignorance which sadly engulfs you. Here is the line in its grand entirety: "The squire is in Longniddry for the grouse season. He will return for the feast of St Lulu."

The fact is that Robert Louis Stevenson's great Victorian novel, *Treasure Island*, has a close connection to this part of the world, for not 10 miles along the coast lies the wonderful golden beach at Yellowcraig. And just offshore... the beautiful island of Fidra, where I regularly offer to take visiting guests. Why is Fidra (allegedly) Treasure Island? Just listen to what the BBC News website says: "When Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the swashbuckling literary classic *Treasure Island*, it is said, he drew inspiration from visits he paid as a child to the island of Fidra, one of a string of three rocky outcrops in the Firth of Forth ..."

Is this true? Maybe. Maybe not, though I certainly like to think that this speculation is rooted in some kind of truth, because I can well imagine the young RLS away back in the middle of the 19th century taking a keen interest in the island. Long before the young boy saw his family's engineering firm building an elegant wee lighthouse on Fidra, the boy had probably built up some familiarity with it. Did he simply look in admiration? Or might he have dared to row out with members of his family for some childhood exploration of his own while they took initial soundings and measurements for the light that would eventually be built there? Who can say?

All this is idle speculation on my part. Of course it is! What we *can* say though is that the young Robert came to know the coastline of East Lothian very well from visits and holidays in these parts. And it seems that he later took and reinterpreted Fidra as the model for his own literary Treasure Island. More, I feel sure that the novelist understood the emotional pull of hidden treasure buried deep beneath the sands, waiting ... waiting ... waiting to be dug up and hauled away by feuding pirates, buccaneers and other such notorious fortune seekers. (Arrrrr, Jim lad!)

And as readers, can we not identify with a swashbuckling tale of derring do whose storyline chimes so brightly with exciting experiences of our own? Consider your own childhood and all your springtime adventuring in search of tasty yet elusive Easter eggs, whether in a church yard ... a park ... even a back garden. And then there were (for me at least) teenage games organised by uniformed organisations or church youth groups, as you joined the frantic hunt for concealed prizes in the belief that you could get there ahead of the opposing team. Great outdoor fun on a sunny day. An activity of the past? I certainly hope not.

In all of this, here is a question to consider: what is the thrill of this chase really all about? It's partly tied in with the nature of the challenge – getting drawn into

seeking out some hidden pearl of great price. And it's also – of course – very much to do with trying your best to be the one who finally gets to bring home the prize: whether a lost haul of gold chocolate coins, or maybe even a matchbox toy car, if you're lucky ... or even just a handful of worthless white pebbles, hidden away in a tree-trunk by the adult leaders for some intrepid 10-year-old to unearth in victory.

But might there also be something kind of beguiling contained within the very notion of treasure? Not merely in the "what" of it all, but in the "where" and in the "how" and in the "who" and in the "why"? Everything surrounding that concept of treasure points to unknown depths of hiddenness: it's a mystery, and one that is itching to be solved. (Shiver me timbers! Ha-harrrrr, mateys!)

I find it quite compelling that the ancient writer of Proverbs, in the second chapter of his book, should turn to the concept of treasure in terms of seeking out that rare and precious jewel of Wisdom. Listen again to what the passage says in verses 3-5: *If you indeed cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding; if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.* [Emphasis added.]

What do we discover here? First, Proverbs is telling us that Wisdom is very firmly something to be sought out in an active sense, rather than just expecting Wisdom to land in our laps. This means that to become wise in the ways of heaven, we must have a mind that is searching, aiming to spot the shimmer of gold and the sparkle of diamonds. Look and listen for Wisdom, and rejoice when you grasp it. Be inspired through the pages of Scripture. Be made to think through books, through films, through conversations and debates. Be engaged with the world in which you live, rather than pulling back. Wisdom is out there, so invite it into your very being.

Also, the paths of discernment are a two-way street, and on that busy thoroughfare you'll encounter lots of people all the time. So meet them, listen to what they have to contribute, get chatting and learn together. As Jesus, himself, so wonderfully says: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

When you travel - physically or metaphorically - have an expectation that you will be travelling with God as you look and listen for treasures being sent from heaven. Listen. And keep listening. And if it so happens that your listening unearths little or nothing, then keep on listening as you wait in hope.

And what about that great virtue of patience? You might think of patience as a necessity in your quest for Wisdom, but is that really the case? What is it that Proverbs chapter 2 actually says? Are you to contemplate in the quietness and listen obediently? Well, apparently not. Here (again!) is what the writer tells us:

... cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding ... [Emphasis added.]

These words of instruction push us firmly in the direction of making a heartfelt plea to God: help me to see! Make me understand! Show me Wisdom that I may grasp it!

How in all of this are we to live adventurous lives of seeking and enquiring after the glorious gift of Wisdom? Perhaps a bit like the four-year-old who is convinced that the Cadbury's cream egg truly, truly will be found: in the flowerpot? (no.) ... stuffed in a big red red? (no.) ... maybe in the watering can? (no.) ... in the shade of the garden gnome? (no.) ... in the herbaceous border (whatever that is)? (no.) ... above the pile of table-tennis equipment? (no.) ... near the water feature? (no.) ... alongside the wheelbarrow? (no.) ... in that clump of nettles? (I hope not.)

Keeping looking. Like that four-year-old, keep looking. ... Keep searching. ... Keep enquiring. ... Keep going in your quest for God's Wisdom. Amen.

Praying for others

Lord of Wisdom, you are with us.

We remember the news this week that one in ten children are referred for mental healthcare. We pray for them and everyone suffering from anxiety. We ask that they may find peace and a return of confidence. We pray they feel you near them, supporting them in their time of trouble.

God of all, you are within us.

Help us remember that. Encourage us to let your light shine out, to let others see how you transform our lives. Our light is not to be hidden, but uncovered to be a lamp for all to see. Remind us of the many gifts you have given us and help us to use them to further your Kingdom here on earth. We are all special to you and so are our gifts – give us the confidence to overcome our modesty and to delight in the skills and talents you have bestowed.

Lord of the universe, Lord of the atom, you are with us, within us and over us. We are in awe of you. But you are not far from us, away in the heavens, the stars or the galaxies. You inhabit every atom and molecule of us. You are as close to us as our breath, our heartbeat. You care for every part of us. We pray that we care for others as much, remembering that every single part of them is loved by you, and so should be loved by us.

Father, we ask this in the name of your Son. Amen.

Weekly Updates ...

Charity Open Garden event: Everyone is invited to visit "The Geans" on Gosford Road, Longniddry, to view the property's lovely garden. This charitable event will be taking place this Sunday (5th) from 1-5pm, with admission at £6 per adult (also, tea and cakes available for £5). In aid of the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust.

"Sing at 6.30": Gladsmuir Parish Church's worship evening for July is set for Sunday 19th on the theme: "Songs of Light and Glory", with uplifting hymns to illuminate our praise. Admission free (offering to benefit Christian Aid Scotland).

Calling Gladsmuir readers!: Would you like to receive *The Sunday Focus* for 26th July, plus 2nd and 9th August? If so, please drop Abigail Morrison an e-mail on abimor1808@gmail.com, specifically requesting this. Data protection requirements make this a necessity for these three Sundays, with normal service resuming from 16th August onwards. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Starbuck chats: It's summer break time, resuming Friday 25th September.

New Age Kurling: Tuesdays from 2-4pm in Room 3, Longniddry Church.

Sporting Memories Group: Thursdays from 10.30am-12 noon in Room 3, Longniddry Church.

Community Art Group: Join us to explore tapestry weaving. All welcome to come along on Thursdays at 2.15pm in Longniddry Church, Room 2. Free of charge.