### “He Leads the Humble” Steve Finlan for The First Church, May 11, 2025

**Psalm 25:4–10, 14**

4Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. 5Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. 6Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. 7Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord! 8Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. 9He leads the humble in what is right and teaches the humble his way. 10All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees. . . 14The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them.

**John 10:22–30**

22At that time the Festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, 23and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. 24So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” 25Jesus answered, “I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name testify to me, 26but you do not believe because you do not belong to my sheep. 27My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. 28I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29My Father, in regard to what he has given me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the Father’s hand. 30The Father and I are one.

Have you ever noticed how the *way* something is asked says a lot about the person asking? In fact, the *way* and the *motive* with which a question is asked is all important. God weighs the heart, the motive, at all times.

The question about whether Jesus is the Messiah needs to be asked sincerely. If one asks it with a sneer in one’s voice and a scoffing attitude, one cannot perceive the answer. Jesus pointed out to the skeptical scribes that if they were his sheep they would recognize his voice, but they are not, and they do not. He will protect his sheep and none can snatch them away. On this matter and on *all* matters, Jesus and his Father have one and the same purpose.

This implies that the enemies of Jesus would like to snatch away his sheep. There is really an implied competition for followers between Jesus and the scribes. But Jesus will protect and preserve his sheep; they cannot be taken away. Further, God and Jesus teach believers the principles of living. They follow Jesus and they have eternal life.

A similar point about God’s guidance occurs in the psalm, where God teaches the humble his way. God is faithful and loving, and everything he teaches imparts these same qualities to his students. Believers “who keep his covenant” (Ps 25:10) are taught in God’s truth, and are led in his paths. The covenant is not just an agreement, it implies a *school of character*. God instills honesty of character, and loyalty and sincerity of attitude. Thus, believers must practice spiritual *cultivation* and effort, also a certain *mindfulness*, attention to what is important. They move in the right paths, because they are following God: “for you I wait all day long” (25:5).

There are a few things the psalmist says that we don’t really need to say. We don’t need to remind God to be merciful, or ask God to forget the sins of our youth. God is already minded to do those things. These expressions grow naturally out of the psalmist’s faith life, but we can be more sure of God’s mercy. We could certainly repeat his statement that “All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness” (25:10), and affirm also “the friendship of the Lord” (25:14). God knows our inner heart and mind; God knows what we need before we ask. God and Jesus see our true selves.

Those who have that faith in God are likely to listen to Jesus as well, and to recognize his voice. Jesus made his disciples his friends, and practiced steadfast love. He was faithful to them, even when they were less than faithful to him, such as when Peter denied him.

He taught them about God’s loving us as a father. We could also talk about God’s mother-like love, the tender and merciful intimacy and affection of God. Jesus used a motherly image for himself when he said: “I have desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings” (Luke 13:34). In this quote, Jesus fills this maternal role. The Moravian Church is one of the oldest Protestant churches, emerging in Bohemia, what we call the Czech region, in the century *before* Martin Luther. The Moravian Christians (zinzendorf.com/content/holy-spirit-as-mother/) and also the Syrian Christians ([www.mothergodexperiment.com/a-brief-history-of-the-holy-spirit-as-mother/](http://www.mothergodexperiment.com/a-brief-history-of-the-holy-spirit-as-mother/)) refer to the Spirit as the Mother of all things or the Mother of the Church. This suggests an interesting picture of the Trinity, consisting of Father, Son, and Mother. The Spirit as Mother of the universe is a very useful image.

What about our earth mothers? A mother’s love is life-giving. But besides being a protector and nurturer, a mother is also a leader. Our mothers are warm and protective, but they are also fierce and efficient. You don’t mess with a mama bear. The mother tends to be the joy-giver in a family. She is the sunlight in the family. So may every mother draw upon the true Light of Life, so that her love reflects the love of God. Not that fathers can’t also bring joy and love. But let us give thanks today for our mothers, and their fierce love.

And just as sheep know their shepherd’s voice, so do children know their mother’s voice. Let us hear the voice of our shepherd and follow him. He will teach us and love us, like a mother or a father, like our earth mothers and fathers have, but with Spirit-perfection, divine lovingkindness, and eternal wisdom.

In the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom speaks. The Greek word for wisdom there is Sophia, a feminine name. She says that when God “established the heavens, I was there . . . I was beside him, like a master-worker” (Wis 8:27, 30). The earlier Book of Proverbs had wisdom speaking, saying “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning . . . When he prepared the heavens, I was there” (Prov 8:23, 27). In Proverbs, the divine Wisdom is *H.ochmah* in Hebrew, also a feminine noun. From the Christian viewpoint, Wisdom seems to correspond to the Spirit. Mother Wisdom is an interesting concept with ancient roots in the Bible.