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Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance. Proverbs 1:5 NIV.

What makes a good teacher? I invite you all to take a moment and think back over your life, and bring to mind anyone who has made a difference in your life. Maybe by the things they have taught you, by the way they have come alongside you, or because of who they are as a role model, inspiration, or teacher.

My father was an Art teacher, back in the days when teaching was considered a vocation, which loosely translates into 'I'm not going to pay you very much, and the work is tough.'

Today we are celebrating the teachers in our congregation. Those who have taught our children here in this church, those who have taught our children up at Milford Central School. We thank them for their commitment, and their perseverance.

We as parents, are also teachers. Of our children, our grandchildren, and other young family members. Traditionally, it has been us who imbue our children with their worldviews, their values, their spiritual sense of who they are, and they usually reflect back to us, our worldview, our values, and our faith.

After all, a Republican is unlikely to raise a Democrat, or as in Scripture, Matthew 7:16-17 says 'Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a

bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Our children become Mini-Me's, by watching, listening, mimicking and by example.

Thus it was with Jesus and his disciples. By his actions, by his words and example, he taught them how to be children of God.

Living in the world, but not of the world.

So today we are going to be looking at teachers in general, and one teacher in particular. The greatest Teacher of all, Jesus Christ.

What do you think makes a good teacher? I think there are at least 4 ingredients:

1. Knowledge of the subject they are teaching.
2. Strong communication skills, so that the student can understand what the teacher is teaching
3. Thirdly, a strong desire for the student to learn. A personal connection.
4. And fourthly, Personality. Actually Personality Plus. A larger than life personality, who intrigues, connects and inspires.

If you think about the teachers who have influence you over your life, I expect some if not all of those factors have been present.

Teachers play a huge role in our culture. Without teachers, our children would not grow into adulthood prepared for life, for work, or for faith.

Maybe in your own life, there was an absence of a good teacher, maybe at home, or at school, or out there in the big wide world. Maybe you had to teach yourself. Sometimes we move forward despite our background, and not because of it.

Scripture has quite a lot to say about teachers. 'Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance. In the book of Proverbs, the overlying theme is about wisdom. What wisdom is, and

how to get it. Very often the wise are contrasted with the unwise, and the consequences of seeking folly instead of seeking wisdom.

Proverbs 1. The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel: for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young— let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

So let's start with knowledge, the first ingredient of a good teacher. In the good old days, older members of the community were respected because of their wisdom. The knowledge and experience they had accrued over the years. In our world, with the rise of Technology, with a capital T, we are more likely to seek the knowledge of a 9 year old than a 99 year old. Which is a pity, because wisdom is both knowledge of which there is a huge abundance, an overabundance available at the press of a finger, and experience. As a 9 year old you might be able to find out a lot of information, but you may not have the experience to put the information into good use.

A good teacher knows what they are talking about. Solomon knew what he was talking about when he wrote Ecclesiastes. Nehemiah knew what he was talking about when he set about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. In marked contrast, were those without knowledge, the unwise builder who built his house upon the sand, and we all know what happened to him... the unwise man given some money, who buried it in the ground, because he knew nothing of investing.

Jesus was teaching his disciples about his Father, a subject he was intimately connected with. He knew what was pleasing to the Father, and what was not. Jesus knew what he was talking about, and many many times we hear how he spoke with authority. Even as a 12 year old child we hear in the Gospel of Luke ‘Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.’

Think about your favorite teacher. Did they know what they were talking about? Chances are, they did.

Secondly, communication skills. Vital to any excellent teacher. One of my favorite teachers back in High School was the Science teacher, Miss Thompson. Built like a large stork, with extraordinarily big feet, she was a mine of information, but with absolutely no communication skills whatsoever. We would sit and listen to her, and nobody had any idea what she was talking about most of the time. At the blackboard, she would write up chemical formulas, and as fast as she wrote them, she would erase them with her elbow, mutter something, and start again.

Communication skills are key to any good teacher.

Jesus knew what he was talking about, and he attracted thousands of people who came to hear him teach. He taught using parables. Analogies with their own lives, and their own experiences. He used water, bread, yeast, sowing seeds, trees, agricultural realities for everyone. They understood what he was talking about.

And he spoke with love.... Because the third ingredient of a good teacher is that personal connection between teacher and pupil. Wanting your students to succeed. Jesus loved his disciples.

John 15:14-16 “You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard

from My Father I have made known to you. “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.’

Jesus inspired confidence, so that when the time came for his disciples to go out together in his name, they did so.

Good teachers inspire confidence. ‘You can do this. You’ve learned such a lot. Go out there and play this game to win it.’ Good coaches know how to both teach and inspire.

Lastly, personality. What is it about our favorite teacher that is so memorable? Maybe they came to school as my father did, with one sock one color, the other sock another. Red sweater with blue shirt, brown tie, one green sock and one black sock. I think of Robin Williams, the charismatic teacher in the movie ‘Dead Poet’s Society’ or Maggie Smith, in the classic ‘The prime of Miss Jean Brodie.’

Excellent teachers are often a little quirky.

Now here, Jesus surpasses them all, because Jesus was unique. There never was a person who walked on this earth like Jesus, and there never will be again. We talked last week about being in the right place at the right time. Jesus entered our world, and changed it forever.

Maybe your favorite teacher came into your life at the right moment. Encouraged you, inspired you. Helped you to move forward with confidence. That is what Jesus does best.

He knows what it is like to be a human. He knows what it is like to be without a home, Luke 9:58. Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’ Jesus knows what it is like to grow up without a lot of money. He was raised in poverty in a small village. Above all, Jesus knows the healing power

of love. And it was love that he passed on to his followers.

Unconditional love, just like the grace, the unconditional forgiveness given to us by God the Father. The Amazing Grace we sing about at regular intervals.

If you know me, you will know my Father. I love you, as the Father loves you. We belong together. We are all members of God's family.

God sees our struggles, and comes alongside us, through the ups and downs of life. He sent his Son, that we might learn from the greatest Teacher ever born on this earth... and that's the other part of the equation.

Good teachers need good students. We can't fulfil our teachers expectations without effort on our part.

Proverbs 1:5 Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.

We need to be wise, and discerning. We need to make good choices.

To listen to the voice of wisdom, to collect knowledge, to collect experiences, and put the two together. That's when we grow up.

That's when we have the opportunity to move from being a student to being a teacher for someone else. Paying it forward.

1 Corinthians 13:11-12 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

We are called to be students, but we are also all called to be teachers, whether at home, school, at home or abroad. That is how Christianity grew into such a positive force in our history. The disciples learned from Jesus and then they taught others what they had learned.

This morning we thank the teachers in our congregation, and we are each of us encouraged to come alongside others and make a difference in their lives. Last Sunday we celebrated the Cortright Scholarship awards, in loving memory of Mr. Cortright, a favorite teacher of many.

Knowledge, communication skills, a strong connection, and personality plus. A fine teacher whose legacy lives on through students today.

(If you've never had the opportunity to thank someone who has been a mentor or teacher to you, there may still be time to let them know what a difference they have made to you. Let us take the time this morning to say a sincere thankyou to Laura, Mindy, and all those who have taught in 'Our Place' this year)

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we seek wisdom in a world of distractions. We seek enlightenment in a world of smoke and mirrors. Help us to discern the truth, and to pursue it. Help us to reach out to others to pass on what we have learned in life.

We thank you for your Son, who we continue to learn from, day by day.

In His precious name we pray. Jesus Christ.

Amen.