

## Sermon 88, Moral Metaphors, Proverbs 25:16-27

**Proposition:** The bad news of human folly and flakiness is matched and overcome by the refreshing good news of the Wise Son's hospitality to His enemies.

- I. Bad News, vv. 16-20, 23-24, 26-27
  - A. Overeating is like overstaying, vv. 16-17
  - B. Lies are like deadly weapons, v. 18
  - C. A flaky person is like a bad tooth, v. 19
  - D. An unwelcome entertainer is like vinegar on a wound, v. 20
  - E. A backbiting tongue is like the rainy north wind, v. 23
  - F. Homelessness is like a bad marriage, only better, v. 24
  - G. The righteous giving way before the wicked is like a poisoned well, v. 26
  - H. Grandstanding is like overeating, v. 27
- II. Good News, vv. 21-22, 25
  - A. The Wise Son is hospitable to His enemies, vv. 21-22
  - B. The Gospel is always refreshing, v. 25

### Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the passage before us presents a lot of bad news about bad people behaving badly. It uses some vivid metaphors to which all of us say "Yes! That's exactly what that bad experience is like." But in the midst of this bad news about the human condition, it also presents some good news about the Wise Son and His hospitality to sinners. What we'll leave with is the knowledge that Christ's kindness matches and overcomes the folly and flakiness of wicked human beings — including us.

#### I. Bad News, vv. 16-20, 23-24, 26-27

Let's look first at the masterful metaphors with which Solomon presents the seamy and unpleasant side of life.

##### A. Overeating is like overstaying, vv. 16-17

The first of them is this: overeating is like overstaying. Too much even of a very good thing like honey will only make you want to vomit. Meanwhile, too much of your neighbor in your house will also make you want to vomit him out! Over-visiting does not make the heart grow fonder. Quite the reverse, in fact.

##### B. Lies are like deadly weapons, v. 18

Lies are like deadly weapons. The man who wields a lie in court is easily comparable to the man who waves a battleaxe or a sword or an arrow. The truth is a tool every bit as powerful as any hand weapon — and its abuse in the form of the lie is powerful for destruction only, not for building up. Just as a sword is not really good for cutting vegetables, so a lie is not good for getting dinner on the table.

### **C. A flaky person is like a bad tooth, v. 19**

Similarly, a flaky person is like a bad tooth. You can forget how unreliable the tooth is until you bite down on it, at which point you say “Whoa!” It’s always a nasty surprise, no matter how many times it’s happened. And so it is to rely on a flaky human being. No matter how many times he’s flaked out before, it’s an unwelcome surprise whenever it happens. I don’t need to elaborate. We all know exactly what this feels like. It feels awful — all the more so in a time of trouble!

### **D. An unwelcome entertainer is like vinegar on a wound, v. 20**

Slightly less horrible than the person who’s always flaky and unreliable is the person who’s always trying to cheer you up and make you feel better when you need to just mourn for a while! You know how your cuts used to feel when your grandma dumped Bactine on them? Yeah. That’s how it feels to have someone sing songs to your heavy heart.

### **E. A backbiting tongue is like the rainy north wind, v. 23**

And how about a backbiting tongue? It’s like the north wind that brings rain. It also makes me furious, and I show that rage all over my face! After all, a backbiting tongue is one that says the meanest, nastiest things. It’s a tongue that constantly tears others down. And it is as massively uncomfortable as the north wind and a cold rain.

### **F. Homelessness is like a bad marriage, only better, v. 24**

As for a bad marriage with a quarrelsome woman, well, let’s just say that it’s like being homeless, except that being homeless is way better. Wow. Do you think it’s worth putting in the time, effort, and repentance necessary to have a good marriage?

### **G. The righteous giving way before the wicked is like a poisoned well, v. 26**

As for the righteous going along with the wicked, that’s like a poisoned well. It looks to promise refreshment, but actually it only promises death. When the PCUSA went liberal in the 1920s, most of the ministers were solid. And so it goes, in situation after situation. You would think that people would stand up for what’s right, especially when they themselves privately do what’s right. But actually, the righteous often totter, often capitulate, often go along with the wicked. Jesus is the only righteous one who never did and never will!

### **H. Grandstanding is like overeating, v. 27**

Finally, in this list of bad news, we see the problem of grandstanding — of showing off in order to get credit or honor in the eyes of the people around you. Trying to get too much glory, doing what you do with an eye on how it will look in the papers or in your reputation around the office or even with your own family is every bit as bad as drinking a bottle of honey. You don’t need that much sugar — and you don’t need that much glory. Don’t grandstand. To do so is to be a glutton on glory.

## **II. Good News, vv. 21-22, 25**

But thankfully, our passage is not limited to the bad news. We also see two huge pieces of good news here.

### **A. The Wise Son is hospitable to His enemies, vv. 21-22**

The first of them is that the Wise Son is always hospitable to His enemies. He feeds them and gives them water to drink.

Now, generally, an enemy is someone who is out to get you. If you see your enemy running into problems, you probably are just as glad. After all, a well-fed and well-watered enemy is a much bigger threat than one who's too hungry and thirsty to move! But Jesus teaches by example. He shows us that He loves His enemies. And He shows that love by feeding them and giving them water to drink. In other words, He shows hospitality — the same hospitality that moved Him to invite us to dwell in His house forever.

You and I are called to imitate Christ in this. We love our enemies by caring for them. It heaps burning coals of shame on their heads. "Mercy is the best revenge," as Michael Fox comments. And more than that, Yahweh will reward the one who practices this kind of mercy.

Do you want God's reward? Then show mercy to your enemies. Jesus showed us mercy by dying for us, and now He is experiencing the full reward at the Father's right hand.

### **B. The Gospel is always refreshing, v. 25**

In truth, the gospel is always refreshing. If you don't feel that refreshment today, then you may not be a Christian. But if you do feel that refreshment, then you know what I'm talking about. The gospel is a drink of cold water — every time. It is good news from the farthest country of all: Heaven. Every time you hear about the character of Christ, your soul should sing. Brothers and sisters, Jesus loves you. He's about to feed you, not with bread and water, but with bread and wine! That's good news from a far country. Hang onto it when you encounter or, worse, become, one of the rotten kinds of people discussed in this passage. Christ will show you mercy! He restores your soul. So turn to Him, accept Him, and be like Him. Amen.