

Jonathan Mark  
FMC Reedley  
Romans 5:1-5 & Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31  
June 12, 2022

### Common Ground of Wisdom & Grace?

- Introduction
  - Good Morning Church
  - May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.
- How do you get to know a stranger?
  - You ask them, where are you from? what do you do? Who do you know?
  - We want to know where we stand, and if we are lucky find some common ground.
  - Last week I talked about the Mennonite game, like at the special delegate session when someone recognized me because they grew up with my mom or knew me through one of you. This was common ground for us, but not for recent converts to the Mennonite faith.
  - Common ground is a shortcut to trust.
  - The problem is that common ground is hard to find, only so many people grew up in your home town or know your parents. And if you move across the country, common ground is even more difficult to find
- Paul and the Romans
  - Paul was trying to find common ground for a bunch of Jewish and Gentile Christians
  - The problem is that decades before this letter was written, Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome and they only recently were able to return at the time of this letter.
  - So the Jewish people think they own the church because Christianity is a sect of Judaism, but they were gone and the Gentiles had to make church work in their own way.
  - Paul could not depend on saying, “you are all children of Abraham” or “you all knew Jesus” Instead, he focuses on how much Jesus loved them so much he died for them.
- The common ground of grace brings us together
- In Proverbs
  - Proverbs is a poetic, creation myth that calls out to people to gain greater wisdom.
  - Our text in Proverbs argues that wisdom is a basic part of being an earthly creature.
  - So the rational mind is something basic, common ground for all humanity.
- Enlightenment/Reformation tangent

- This reminds me of the enlightenment experiment when Europe was going through the upheaval of decades of religious wars, Catholics and Protestants were killing each other. (though much more complicated, more about politics, economics, etc)
- So the great white male thinkers said that even if we have different religions all humans have a rational mind.
- The common ground of wisdom brings us together.
- Application
  - I have a few takeaways
  - What is our common ground, is there something that we all agree on? Do we seek wisdom? Are we willing to love each other even though we are enemies?
  - I am suspicious of common ground, it is always shifting and moving. In Paul's time, Jesus was the distinctive thing that kept the Roman churches together, but by the reformation, Jesus was not enough to prevent the split between the Catholic and Protestant churches.
  - I am also broken-hearted by a statement I heard in the special delegate session that Mennonite Church USA, through the membership guidelines, was formed by making the common enemy of queer folks. Do we have to make enemies in order to be on common ground? Much like the common ground of the 49ners means, we must oppose the Rams. In short, how can we become an "us" without a "them"?