

Vision Sunday | September 7, 2025

Proverbs 29:18

Take a moment to catch your breath... I thought I'd start today with a little suspense and intrigue... By show of hands, how many of us have seen or even heard of the show *Silo*? While I can't see whether any hands are raised in our locations, as compelling as *I think* that trailer is, I'm guessing very few. Cause when I found myself enthralled with this show earlier this summer and kept asking people whether they'd seen it, almost everyone said, "No." And you know why?! Not because your favourite show is better! No, it's because we no longer live in the age of *the water cooler show*! You know, *the show* that aired on television once a week on Thursday nights that *everyone* was watching and talked about the next day around the proverbial water cooler. Nope, not anymore! Now we live in the age of 15 streaming services each with 15,000 shows, all guaranteed to be "Your Next Watch!"

Admittedly, it's been a while since I've really *gotten into* a show. But when a friend of mine mentioned they thought I'd enjoy *Silo*, coincidentally when my calendar was less full than usual, I suddenly found myself hooked in the grip of "Next Episode in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1..."

Now, without too many spoilers (as you know this is now "Your Next Watch!"), the premise of *Silo* is that it's set in a post-apocalyptic future where only 10,000 people remain and are all living together in a highly structured and highly class-based society, all in a concrete silo underground. But here's the thing, the people don't actually know how they got there or why things seem to *have* to be the way they are. That is, until, a small group of people start encountering a revelation – a discovery that there may be more going on than meets the eye – a glimpse of a vision that life could be different. And in the midst of the great story telling in *Silo* – in a genre mash up of two of my favourites, somewhere between *The Matrix* and *Lost* – what I quickly found most compelling about *Silo* was the characters' intense search for truth. They're search for meaning. They're search for purpose.

They're search for freedom, justice, and redemption. They're search for a vision to believe in. For something to give their lives to. All in a constant search for something – or someone – to make sense of a complicated, and at times, anxious or even scary existence. With questions like we heard in the trailer: *Why are we here? Who or what is behind all this? Why does the world seem so unsafe? What if what we see is not as it seems? And: Are we willing to give everything it takes to know, understand, embrace, and follow the truth?*

And friends, aren't those the questions of our lives and our stories and our world as well? Wondering: What is going on here? What's life really about? Especially in an age of anxiety, political chaos, polarization, distrust, deconstruction, algorithms, AI, economic injustice, and global conflicts. And can anything or anyone make sense of it all?

If you're here with us for the first time, or perhaps back for the first time in a while, today – the Sunday after Labour Day – generally marks a re-launch of sorts in our community that we refer to as ***Vision Sunday***. It's a chance for us to re-group from summer rhythms and re-centre ourselves on *why we're here* and *what we're about* as a community. And we've found this re-centering on our shared vision to be something we all need from time to time.

In the Old Testament wisdom book known as Proverbs, **Proverbs 29:18** says:

Where there is no vision, the people perish...

This section of Proverbs is a collection of sayings attributed to the famous Hebrew king, King Solomon (son of the even more famous King David), who ruled ancient Israel in the 900's BC and became known as one of the wisest king's to ever live. In this particular chapter of Proverbs, this saying is set among a list of sayings that contrast wisdom and foolishness. Good and evil. Justice and injustice. Contrasting what life is like when things seem as they should versus when things seem as they shouldn't.

And in essence, this short proverb suggests that when people don't have a clear vision of what life is about – unable to see the truth as it is or understand life as it's meant to be – they *perish*.

Now, the word “perish” can stir up all sorts of connotations: from wondering which items in your pantry are suitable for the food drive, to perhaps, religious anxiety and confusion depending on your upbringing. But an even better translation of “**perish**” in this proverb is to “run wild”. Or more literally to “let loose.” Or to “cast off restraint.” That when the world – a society or group of people – doesn't have a clear sense of what life is about or where things are going, chaos is likely to ensue. Think about a time before the clear driving “vision” of Google Maps or Waze (for those of us brought up in the 1900's): and if you didn't have a physical map, or were suddenly sent down an unexpected detour, or the weather was making it difficult to see the road, you were likely to get anxious, to make a wrong turn, get lost, or find yourself in a fight with your spouse about asking for directions.

In fact, as the plot in *Silo* unfolds, it's interesting, because this is exactly what happens. While some people begin to catch a vision that not everything is as it seems, not everyone sees it. And it's not yet fully clear to those who have. And it's definitely not something everyone sees the same way. And with this lack of clear vision the story begins to *run wild*.

Now listen to the second half of **Proverbs 29:18**:

Where there is no vision, the people perish; but blessed are those who heed wisdom's instruction.

As per the structure of this chapter of Proverbs, this saying includes a contrast between life as it's not meant to be (without vision) and life as it's meant to be. It says, “blessed are those who heed wisdom's instruction.”

Now, like *perish*, “blessed” can mean all kinds of things to all kinds of people, most often assumed to mean health and wealth, success and good fortune shown off through jealousy-inducing social media posts. However, that’s not what the biblical word “blessed” is getting at. Rather than material circumstances or fortune, “**blessed**” in the Bible refers to an inner experience that grounds your entire life. Most literally, an inner sense of delight. Of contentment, peace, and joy no matter how the circumstances of your life are going. That however life is going, the “blessed” are at peace and content as they go through it.

And the proverb says this comes from heeding “wisdom’s instruction.” Notice that it doesn’t just say heeding “wisdom”. But almost makes it sound like this *wisdom* and *instruction* is coming from somewhere. Or maybe even coming from *someone*. And this is on purpose. Because right from the beginning of the Wisdom Book of Proverbs, the concept of “**wisdom**” is personified. That wisdom is understood like a presence. Or a voice. Or almost like a person who can be seen and known and listened to and followed. And that when you heed this “wisdom’s” instruction, you begin to experience a life of blessing – a life of peace – rather than feeling like your life is chaotic or running wild. Essentially, the concepts of *vision* and *wisdom* become one in this proverb, as the key to a life that doesn’t perish but experiences blessing.

Where there is no vision, the people perish; but blessed are those who heed wisdom’s instruction.

So if that proverb is true, then the question for us today – especially on *Vision Sunday* – is: Where does this vision or wisdom come from? And will any old vision do? Cause the truth is, there are all sorts of “visions” for life out there. Think about the vision every ad you’ve ever seen tries to sell you on, that “*more is better*”. But the problem is that if you pursue that vision, you’re destined to never be satisfied – to never be content – cause more is *always* better. And rather than delivering a true sense of blessing, this vision causes us to perish in stress and anxiety because of the constant need to achieve or accumulate more.

Or what about the vision of “*you do you*”? Which certainly encourages the virtue of being authentic, but left unchecked I think can have us become individualistic and self-centred, missing out on the blessing of authentic community and perishing in what’s being described as an epidemic of loneliness infecting our generation.

Or how about: “*you gotta work for the weekend*.” A vision that steals any grander purpose from our lives and leaves us spending our resources solely on attempts at our own pleasure or fulfilment, and therefore exacerbates the growing gap between rich and poor.

Or maybe one more... How about: “*all you need is love*”? Which I gotta admit, I’m pretty fond of – especially as a Beatles fan – but I’ve also seen immediately break down as soon as people disagree about what we mean by “love”, and without a grounding centre, often lose the capacity to love those we disagree with, causing us to perish in polarization as a society hardly capable of talking to the “other side” let alone living in harmony together.

So if all these visions only seem to lead to more perishing, what “vision” is Proverbs 29:18 referring to? Well, I believe the answer is found in perhaps the most important piece of the **Proverbs 29:18** puzzle in how the word “**vision**” is best and more accurately translated:

Where there is no revelation, the people perish.

That this proverbial “vision” isn’t about just any *vision*. That this isn’t about some motivational talk or podcast. This isn’t about a Sunday sermon. This isn’t about a political platform. This isn’t about an Instagram rant or algorithm. This isn’t about a great song lyric. No, this *vision* is about a *revelation* – and specifically, a revelation from God. That when people don’t have a clear vision – or *revelation* – of who God is and the life God has for us, they begin to perish, with our lives and our world running wild with confusion and chaos. And how much of our lives and our world can feel that way these days...

But here's the good news I want you to hear on *Vision Sunday 2025* – that God hasn't left us to perish. That God hasn't left us without vision. That God hasn't left us without a revelation. In perhaps the most famous verse in the Bible, the gospel writer, John, declared:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

That at the heart of the good news of Jesus is that God has given us his Son so that when we look to him with faith, we don't have to let our lives continue to run wild with chaos or confusion, but we can actually experience a new kind of life that Jesus called "eternal life" or "life from above." Not just a life for some future somewhere else but a life for right here and now, legitimately experiencing the blessing described in Proverbs 29:18.

And the scriptures go further to explain that this gift of God's Son, Jesus, is in fact God's full and picture-perfect revelation that can give us a clear vision of who God is in order to make this life possible. In **Hebrews 1:1-3** the New Testament author writes:

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son... The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

The writer says that if you've ever wondered what God is like, all you need to do is look at Jesus. And while there had been mini glimpses or revelations in the past, Jesus is the exact representation of what God is like and is the one who holds all of life together.

One step further, when you explore the life and teaching of Jesus, you begin to see that Jesus made this claim about himself as well. Again, in the Gospel of John, John quotes Jesus as saying, in **John 14:6-7**:

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

That Jesus says, *“Do you want to know what life is about and how it’s meant to be lived? Then look at me! I can show you! My life is the way!”* And even more significantly: *“If you want to know God (“Father” as Jesus called him), all you need to do is get to know me. And as you get to know me you will know God, and God’s heart, and see clearly what God is like and what God has for you in this life and it will change (and bless!) everything for you!”*

That if your life is full of stress and anxiety in the pursuit of more, look to Jesus and he will show you the way of peace and contentment. That if you’re feeling lost and alone in an epidemic of loneliness, Jesus will welcome and include you in a spiritual family. That if all you’re doing is working for the weekend, Jesus will make your life about so much more, calling you to live beyond yourself through compassion and justice. And if you’re compelled by the idea that “all you need is love” but you’re lost in how to live it out, Jesus will show you what love really is by making outsiders insiders, enemies into neighbours, and ultimately through his self-sacrificial death on the cross for the world God so loves.

Friends, this is God’s vision. This is God’s revelation. This is Jesus. And pursuing him as our vision and following him with our lives is what we’re about as a church and what we believe leads us from a life of perishing into a life of blessing.

So friends, whether you’ve been here for 30 years or 30 minutes, this is the invitation: *to join us in pursuing the God revealed in Jesus together.* We do this in personal ways, by engaging in spiritual rhythms and practices. We do this in relational ways, by building authentic friendships in our missional communities and Life Groups. We do this through compassion, justice, and generosity – loving and caring for the poor and marginalized, not just by meeting practical needs but by intentionally investing in unlikely friendships with those who may be different than us in a way that only helps us see Jesus more clearly.

And we do this by getting together every Sunday here. And this coming year, I'm excited for how we'll do that through a community study of **The Book of Revelation**. Starting next Sunday, and for a good portion of the next 10 months, we're going to lean into one of the most compelling – but at times, most dangerously confused or misunderstood books of the Bible. And I believe it has the power and potential to provide a *vision* – or shall I say, *revelation* – of Jesus in our world and in our church, and how we can follow his way, truth, and life together like never before, right here in our time and our day, so full of chaos and questions and anxiety and fears that threaten to make us perish. In fact, revealing Jesus is exactly what The Book of Revelation promises to do in its opening line, in **Revelation 1:1**:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ...

That whether you have no background with this book or all kinds of baggage, that seeing Jesus as the vision for life is actually what this book is about – from a time and day that experienced as much or more confusion and chaos. That through reading and studying this unique and compelling book together, we have the opportunity to discover and experience more of God's vision – more of *God's revelation* – in and through the person of Jesus in a way that can keep us from perishing and lead us to blessing.

As you may have noticed earlier, I spent a fair bit of time thinking about the show *Silo* this summer (and yes, I'm looking forward to season 3 in the fall now that I'm *hooked* on the show). But more than *Silo* being an interesting show or compelling story, I think I've been thinking about it as much as I have been because of how much I'm anticipating our journey through Revelation, especially as we all wrestle with questions about what's going on in our world? And what if there's more than we've realized? And where is God in the midst of it all?

And on a practical note, it's also had me reflecting on how *Silo* is one of those shows that if you haven't seen the very first episode, it can be hard for the rest to ever fully make sense. And from then on, it's like any of those shows that if you jump into the middle of the story somewhere, you feel a lot of "*What's going on here?*" to try to catch up on. And it makes me wonder whether our journey through Revelation could have some of that feel to it, making me want to invite and encourage all of us to make it a habit and high priority to consistently tune in and participate in this journey together – because of how it could provide a fresh, or even first-time, vision of who Jesus really is and what his vision for our lives can be.

Friends: *Where there is no vision* (or more accurately, *no revelation*) *the people perish*. But the good news is that God has not left us to perish. No, God has given us his vision – his revelation – fully and perfectly revealed in Jesus.

So what if we wholeheartedly pursued this vision – *this revelation* – of the God revealed in Jesus together? And what if Jesus is the one who can truly make sense of our lives and our world, leading us from feeling like we're perishing in chaos and confusion to becoming people who are experiencing his blessing – his peace, comfort, clarity, and love? And then sharing that blessing – that life and that love – with the world around us?

Maybe, just maybe, that's a vision – *that's a revelation* – worth getting hooked on!

Let's pray together...