

Proverbs 9:1–6, The Simple Get Wisdom
8/22/21 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Parish Picnic Day
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Proverbs 9:1–6 (NKJV)

¹ Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn out her seven pillars;
² She has slaughtered her meat,
She has mixed her wine,
She has also furnished her table.
³ She has sent out her maidens,
She cries out from the highest places of the city,
⁴ “Whoever *is* simple, let him turn in here!”
As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him,
⁵ “Come, eat of my bread
And drink of the wine I have mixed.
⁶ Forsake foolishness and live,
And go in the way of understanding.

You need to eat, and there are two people that want the honor of feeding you. Today we’re blessed to be having our parish picnic with a meal after the worship service, but that’s not the food I’m talking about. Proverbs chapter nine contrasts lady Wisdom inviting you to eat her food in her house versus lady Folly inviting you to eat stolen food in secret.

Proverbs 9:6 says that the result of eating the meal in Wisdom’s house is that you live. Proverbs 9:17-18 gives a very different picture for what awaits all who reject Wisdom and instead follow after Folly. Lady Folly says, ¹⁷“Stolen water is sweet, And bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.” ¹⁸ But he [who enters that house] does not know that the dead *are* there, *That* her guests *are* in the depths of hell.”

You will either be fed by Wisdom or by Folly. What’s it going to be? Proverbs 9 says it’s a matter of life and death. We want to live, so how do we get to Wisdom’s house and eat there? We don’t want to die and descend to the depths of hell, so how do we avoid Folly’s house and her poison?

In John 6:51 Jesus gives a parallel to the invitation of Wisdom in Proverbs 9 to eat a meal that will give life. Jesus said, ⁵¹“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” He’s inviting you to a meal that will give you life. What food is at this life-giving meal? It’s the bread of life. How does Jesus give you that bread? He gives you Himself, because He is the bread of life.

To believe in Jesus Christ is to eat the bread of life and live forever. How do you enter Wisdom’s house and eat the meal that gives life? Believe in Jesus. In John 6:47, Jesus said, “he who believes in Me has everlasting life.” Proverbs 9:10 says, “The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom.” To fear the Lord is to believe in Him. It doesn’t mean just be afraid, but to have a reverent awe of God that makes you not want to transgress Him but instead love and trust in Him. To fear, love, and trust in God above all things begins with believing in Jesus.

While believing in Jesus is what it means to eat the life-giving meal offered by Lady Wisdom, Jesus also gives a parallel to the poisonous meal being served by Folly. In John 6, John writes that there were Jews who were not believing in Jesus despite hearing Him teach and seeing the miracles and signs He performed. Jesus referred to them as spiritual descendants of the Israelites who ate the manna in the wilderness and died. Those Israelites had seen God's mighty works and yet they hardened their hearts in sin and unbelief.

The Jews in John 6 had just eaten the miraculous bread and fish from the feeding of the 5,000. But since they served not God but the desires of their flesh, they weren't interested in believing in Jesus, they were only interested in another meal of that bread. They were like the Israelites grumbling against Moses in Exodus.

Were those unbelieving Israelites in Wisdom's house or in Folly's house? They were certainly eating—they had manna and quail from God, but their eating ended in death for them. The manna itself wasn't a foolish meal—it was a gift from God. But for the unbelieving Israelites to eat without believing God's warnings and His promises was foolish. Their unbelief and hardness of heart led to their death. Hebrews 3:19 says, "So we see that they could not enter [the Promised Land] because of unbelief."

You can have all the wisdom of this world and still be utterly foolish before God if you don't have the wisdom that comes from Him. You can have all the riches and property and gadgets and clothes and toys in the world and still be utterly poor before God if you don't have His wisdom. You can have all the pleasures of this world and reach all your goals in this life and still have nothing if you don't have the wisdom of God.

If you hear nothing else today, hear this: Jesus is the wisdom of God in the flesh. God's words are wise, and Jesus is the Word of God in the flesh. Wisdom in Proverbs chapter nine provides a meal of bread and wine to strengthen the simple and bring them joy and life. The bread and the wine in Holy Communion is Jesus' body and blood given and shed for you to eat and drink for the strengthening of your faith, for the joy of your salvation, and for eternal life in Him.

It's not me making the connection between God's wisdom and Jesus. God makes the connection for us in 1 Corinthians chapter one. There the Apostle Paul recognizes that the Jews are not dummies and the Greeks are not dummies, but that both have tendencies to trust in worldly things instead of God's Word. 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 says, ²²"For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

There Paul connects the dots between Proverbs nine and John six when he writes "Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God." Why does Proverbs 3:19 say, "The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens"? Because Jesus is the wisdom of God in the flesh, and as Colossians 1:16 says, "by Him [that is, by Jesus] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible."

The question is not, "Will you eat?" The question is, "Will you be eating in the house of Wisdom or in the house of Folly?" The house of Folly places your desires in the place of God and without repentance and faith, leads you in pleasure until you die. The house of Wisdom leads you to fear, love, and trust in God for true wisdom, believing in Jesus who is the wisdom of God in the flesh.

Wisdom invites you to the feast of faith and life and right fear of the Lord in Proverbs 9:4-6,
⁴ “Whoever *is* simple, let him turn in here!’ *As for* him who lacks understanding, she says to him,
⁵ ‘Come, eat of my bread And drink of the wine I have mixed. ⁶ Forsake foolishness and live, And go in
the way of understanding.’”

Now I’ll quote from the People’s Concordia Commentary on this passage which says, “To accept wisdom’s invitation, we must first admit that we need it, that we are among the ‘simple’ and ‘those who lack judgment’ (verse 4). Then we also need to follow through and taste of the banquet—‘eat my food and drink the wine’ (verse 5). ‘Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves,’ writes James. ‘Do what it says’ (James 1:22). All this begins to take place in our lives when the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus.”

Turning away from the house of Lady Folly to enter the house of Lady Wisdom and be nourished there is to repent of your sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The food that you are fed is Christ Himself, the living bread from heaven. In the strength of that nourishment, you are led to walk godly lives which honor your heavenly Father and demonstrate love for your neighbor.

We have failed to always seek God’s wisdom. We have in fact often lived as if God didn’t matter and as if we mattered most. Repent and look to Jesus. As you cry out to Him He storms the gates of Folly’s house, rescues you, and brings you into the house of God’s Wisdom where you will find food that gives eternal life.

The People’s Commentary on this passage goes on to say, “Wisdom’s feast in this life is but a foretaste of heaven, where we will join in ‘the wedding supper of the Lamb’ (Revelation 19:9).” Whenever you hear God’s Word, you are being fed. Whenever you specifically hear from God’s Word that your sins are forgiven on account of Christ, you are being fed the bread of life, wisdom in the flesh, Jesus Himself. Whenever you receive Holy Communion, Jesus is again giving you the bread of life with the same effect.

All of the ways that God feeds us in His Church, His house of Wisdom, are for your good. When the wisdom of God’s Word reveals our sin and we are humbled and terrified in our conscience of God’s wrath, we have been fed a healthy meal of God’s Law. But God doesn’t stop there. The simple truly get wisdom when the Holy Spirit works through God’s Word to also deliver the comfort and assurance that your sins are forgiven.

Jesus, who was not foolish, took the place of all of us foolish sinners and died for us at the cross. I’ll close by paraphrasing Proverbs 9:3-6, which is Wisdom’s invitation to all who are simple. I’ll paraphrase it so that I can include who the invitation is really the invitation to believe in Jesus.

Here’s your invitation: Whoever is simple, let him turn to the cross. As for him who lacks understanding, Come, eat the bread of life, believe in Jesus. Drink of wisdom’s wine, receiving Holy Communion with faith in Jesus. Forsake foolishness and live. Don’t continue in unbelief and unrepentance, but repent and believe the Gospel. And finally, go in the way of understanding. With faith in Jesus for your salvation, walk worthy of the calling which you have received: honor God; love your neighbor; daily repent; daily believe.

And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.