

13th Sunday after Pentecost – Year B
August 30, 2009
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
Proverbs 9:1-6
Pastor Paul Horn

Heed Wisdom's Invitation

Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. 2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. 3 She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. 4 "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment. 5 "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.. 6 Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding. 7 "Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. 8 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. 9 Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning. 10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. 11 For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. 12 If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer." 13 The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. 14 She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, 15 calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. 16 "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment. 17 "Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!" 18 But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave.

In Proverbs chapter 9, wisdom is personified as a woman - a woman who prepares her home for guests. Wisdom's house has seven pillars. Seven is the biblical number symbolizing completeness. Perhaps we could say that her house is ready. The china, crystal wine glasses, the finest polished silverware and the neatly folded linen napkins - all of these are arranged on the table. She has prepared and cooked the food. The wine she places on the table has been aged to perfection. Her guests will have a good time. I think all of us would agree that this sounds like a dinner party we would not want to miss. I wish I were invited to that party! We discover that wisdom has extended her invitation to all people. And Wisdom is not ashamed to shout her invitation from the highest parts of the city. She even sends her servant girls out to the alleys and main streets and highways so that no one is missed. She calls out, "Let all who are simple come in here! Come, eat my food and drink the wine."

What is this food and wine that wisdom invites us to eat and drink? This proverb from Solomon reminds us, as much as it pains us as Lutherans who love our food and potlucks to hear it, there is more important food than earthly, physical food. Moses in Deuteronomy 8:3 wrote, "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." Wisdom invites us to feast on God's Word – by going to

church, attending Sunday school, Adult Bible Class, catechism class and studying the Scriptures with family and friends.

Before we can accept wisdom's invitation to feast on God's Word, we must admit that we need it. We have to admit that we are the "simple" and we are "those who lack judgment" (vs4). All of us must admit that we could always grow in our understanding of God's Holy Word and our salvation. All of us must admit that not only do we need to hear the Word of God, but also do what it says. But...before we do anything of these things, it is necessary that we first of all have saving faith. For without faith it is impossible to do the things that God commands us to do. All of you this morning can thank God that you do have saving faith. You can thank God that he sent his Holy Spirit to plant the seed of faith in you at your baptism. And just like a seed that is planted in the ground our faith needs the sun light and water of God's Word and Sacraments so that our trust in Christ can grow. Our faith needs the food and drink of the Scriptures so that we might not remain spiritual infants, but grow up and become mature in our understanding.

Unfortunately Wisdom is not the only calling to you. Folly also prepares food at her home. She also sends out her invitation. She even uses the same language as Wisdom, "Let all who are simple come in here!" (vs16) Folly is the wisdom of this world – its philosophies and opinions that claim to override Scripture. Folly is popular culture and the lack of morality that is accepted in this world. Folly is the alternative lifestyles which we are told to condone and accept. Folly is the cohabitation of unmarried couples, the disrespect by children to their parents, fathers who are clueless and lazy and are not the spiritual heads of the house, the materialism of America, all of which are paraded before our eyes on TV and movies, is intertwined with our music and the mainstream media. Folly calls out, "Come here and be wise!" Whose invitation will we accept? Which party will we attend?

We may refuse to admit that we are the simple minded or those who lack judgment from vs4, and we show it by our unfaithfulness in worship and Bible study. "I know it all already. I know the Bible stories. I know that the preacher is going to say the same thing every Sunday. I already know that Jesus is my Savior and I'm going to heaven. Why do I need to learn more about the Bible? I'm a pretty individual. Besides, I don't have time for it. It's easy for the pastor to tell us to make time for Bible study. He does it everyday because it's his job!" That's a good point. But what if I prepared for sermons, Bible class, catechism class, devotions, Bible Information Class and counseling and not engage in Bible study for myself?

Are you really satisfied with having a "Sunday school knowledge" of the Bible, or a "catechism understanding" of doctrine? Do you really have no time for personal growth? Do you really make excuses why you shouldn't study God's Word which is beneficial for your soul? Then the Bible calls us fools! Fools are the ones who despise wisdom and discipline. Fools are spiritually stupid. They may be highly intelligent by worldly standards, but in God's eyes, fools. Fools dine at Folly's home. Solomon in Proverbs tells us that eating at Folly's home leads to death. Folly steers us away from the truth to false teachings and the self-centered philosophies of this world. They may taste good at

first, but in the end they will kill. So whose house are you eating at? Another important question to ask on this Christian Education Sunday would be, “Whose house are your children eating at?”

Which food and drink do you allow them to consume? The spiritual junk food that is piped through their MP3 players, seen on their video games, movies and TV programs, read in their books, and the friends they hang out with? Do we as parents even care about the amount of spiritual junk food our children consume everyday in our homes? Whose house are your children dining at?

My grandfather was a Lutheran pastor from 1945-1990. My dad recently showed me my grandpa’s Bible. On the back page, Grandpa Horn had recorded the dates he started reading his Bible in his retirement years. From the day he retired from the ministry in 1990, he had read the entire Bible nine times and the New Testament twice in one year before he was called to his eternal home in the fall of 2000. 9 times in 10 years... Here was a pastor, who had gone through eight years of schooling, was a pastor for 45 years, God’s Word was his job, and he still heeded Wisdom’s invitation. Why did he do that? Why answer Wisdom’s call knowing that you will soon be home with Jesus?

Why do we heed Wisdom’s invitation? What do we find when we come to her house? When we come to God’s house or when we study God’s Word at home, we come humble and repentant. We plead for his mercy to forgive us for despising his Word, for teaching our children to walk down the wrong path, for dining at Folly’s house one too many times. We come to Wisdom’s house and feast on God’s Word because there we find the Gospel. The Gospel is good news, the greatest news that the Father forgives humble, repentant sinners. Through the Word and Sacraments the Holy Spirit shares this good news with us that because we have faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior, the Father looks at his Son’s life, not ours, and pronounces us not guilty of our sins. You see, Jesus never neglected the study of his Father’s Word. Jesus never despised worship. Jesus kept the study of Scripture as his top priority in life. He loved going to worship in the synagogues and the temple. The Father reassures us that our unfaithful lives are covered by Christ’s perfect life through our baptisms. The Father further reassures us that our sins against his Word are absolved when he offers us his Son’s body and blood to eat and to drink in the Lord’s Supper. Christ Jesus offered this body and blood, the ultimate price, to cancel our sins, to give us the sure hope that heaven is ours, and to strengthen us to walk in the way of understanding.

Why answer Wisdom’s call? Because there we find true spiritual food and drink, which alone will give us true, lasting peace, which this world cannot give. There we find food and drink which satisfy, like no steak or baked potato ever could. There we find food and drink, the Gospel, which alone can give us true wisdom, which makes us wise for eternity. The Gospel alone increases our knowledge, strengthens our faith, and gives us true understanding. The Gospel changes our attitudes to steer away from Folly’s home and redirects our steps toward the life-giving Word. The more we eat and drink at Wisdom’s home, the less we fall into Folly’s trap which leads to spiritual death. The more we eat and drink at Wisdom’s home, the more we will walk in the way of

understanding. (vs6) Then we will have the attitude, “I need to grow and I want to grow in wisdom and understanding.”

Martin Luther once asked his son Hans, “How much do you know?” His son proudly replied, “The whole catechism, Papa, because I know it by heart!” Luther said, “Is that so? If you really understand that much, you are wiser than I am. I still have to study it every day.” This from the man who wrote the catechism. This is the new attitude you have when we eat and drink God’s Word. You will listen to Wisdom’s call and answer her invitation. That’s why the church council will reevaluate the time the ushers spend counting the offerings after church. What are we telling our young people who are signing up for these duties? That counting the church’s money is more important than Bible study?

As parents we will listen to Wisdom’s call, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21) As parents and grandparents we will make faithful worship attendance a habit. We will attend Bible class. We will encourage our children to attend Sunday school. We will do what we can to assist the Sunday school teachers by learning our children’s homework with them, by reviewing the Sunday school lesson. Who knows, we may grow with our children, and how cool would that be? We will encourage our teens to be faithful with their catechism classes. We will set the example and read God’s Word for ourselves at home. Our children and grandchildren will be watching and they will take note. And if you do not have a set plan for daily, personal Bible study, you will go home today and make a plan. You will schedule time into your busy days so that you will make study of God’s Word your top priority of each and every day. And when we sit down at Jesus’ feet to listen to his Words, we will turn off the TV, close our laptops, mute the radio, ignore the ringing cell phone and text messages. Then, it will be true of us as Luther said, “Let each his lesson learn with care, and all the household well shall fare.”

My dear friends, Wisdom is calling. Will you go and dine with her? Amen.