

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty and merciful God, it is only by Your gift of grace that we come into Your presence and offer true and faithful service. Grant that our worship on earth may always be pleasing to You and in the life to come, give us the fulfillment of what You have promised; Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Alleluia (Hebrews 4:12 cf. RSV)

Sermon Text:

A Philosopher, a Physicist, and a Common Man stand around a piece of fruit. When asked what the fruit is, the philosopher says "We can never know what this piece of fruit truly is. We can only assume that the form of the fruit is closest to our perception of the fruit." The physicist states: "Truly there is no fruit. The fruit is simply the interaction of fundamental forces and unseeable particles colliding through time until the object before you appears." The Common Man looked at them both, raised an eyebrow, looked down at the fruit, shook his head, and looking up again replied, "Guy's, it's an apple." Jokes like this one may make us giggle but they also help to prove a point. Wisdom is more than the accumulation of knowledge. It is often a blend of experience, intellect, and the ability to rightly apply it.

Solomon was once presented with the proverbial genie in a bottle scenario. God appeared to him in a dream at night after he had presented 1000 burnt offerings at Gibeon and said, "*Ask for whatever you want me to give you.* (1 Kings 3:5)" While I can think of at least a few things I would probably ask for first, Solomon asks for a wise and discerning heart to govern God's people. As a result, Solomon becomes the wisest of all human beings save one (Jesus) to have ever walked the earth. The book of Proverbs is Solomon's great book of wisdom. In fact, it also goes by the name "The Wisdom of Solomon". As God inspires its words this evening/morning, we are introduced to a personification of Wisdom as God invites us to walk with her in the true and lasting wisdom which only He can give.

Lao Tzu, who we will call a Chinese philosopher, is often quoted as having said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Perhaps the first step as we read through our lesson in Proverbs is to ask a simple question of ourselves. "Is Wisdom calling to us here?"

I know, it seems to easy right? And sure enough, sometimes an apple is an apple. Of course, Wisdom is meant to be calling the reader here but don't just glance over the significance of that statement either. Listen again to those words she calls out, "*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. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding."*

To claim that Wisdom is inviting us is to admit that the titles she uses are also correct of us. Are you simple? Perhaps a bit of understand of the Hebrew used here would be helpful. I know, linguistics can get pretty dry but hey, it's a sermon about Wisdom, right? Anyway, the word translated "simple" can mean "empty or spacious" (think empty headed here) it seems to carry with it the connotation of one who is easily enticed by the traps and snares of their enemies. Seems to fit with the other phrase Wisdom uses for us, those "*who lack judgment*". To harsh?

Proverbs 9:1-6

^{9:1} 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." – NIV84

Oh, I don't know. How many different versions are there of what's going on in the world these days? Doesn't look like we are discerning as humanity is blown and tossed back and forth with every new wind of thought or opinion (cf. Ephesians 4:14). Maybe "easily enticed" sums it up as groups run around listening only to what their itching ears want to hear (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3).

I suppose we could even get personal today. It's easy to shake my head and wag my finger at the foolishness of others but what about those Words from the book of Ephesians as we heard them? *"¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:15-20)"* Do those positives describe you in every situation, always and in everything? Me neither. Turns out Wisdom knows what she is doing and using the exact words she should be and with reason.

Brothers and sisters, Wisdom is not trying to be a jerk here. Far from it! She wants us to understand who we are so that we would turn from it and follow after her. Listen again to the wisdom set before us. ^{9:1} *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."*

Do you notice it there? Wisdom has done everything already. She has built the house (a common picture for the church of God), hewn out its seven pillars (Seven a common number for God in Scripture. Pillars perhaps a symbol of strength or support.), she has prepared the meal, mixed the wine, set the table and sent out the maids with invitations. Now ladies, I know there is a joke in here but before we head in that direction, theologically what and who does all the work? It's God right? God as He shows us who we are and what He has done for us in the wisdom that is His Word, both law and gospel. It is in the Gospel that God then bids us follow after Him and of course, what God demands, God supplies, giving us the very gift of faith which listens to and follows after God's holy Word as well.

And the Gospel's message? Well that brings us back to the one human being who was wiser even the Solomon, who was gifted with wisdom and discernment by God. Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, is not a literary personification of the Wisdom of God's Word, but *"the Word made flesh"* for us (cf. John 1:14) that He might live Ephesians 5 and all of God's law perfectly for us. Though perfect in every way, He will allow Himself to suffer the agony of death to pay for our sin as is fastened to that cross that His flesh (as he stated in our gospel lesson) might be given for the life of the World. Risen and ascended, we have the proof that this it is not the height of folly to follow after Him but established fact, rock-solid truth and something to hold on to when the winds of our world begin to blow. And while John 6 certainly makes us think about the Lord's Supper, as Jesus speaks of drinking blood and eating flesh it is really this Gospel message which comes to us in Word and in Sacraments that is the way of understanding in which Wisdom would bid us walk, to make regular use of as we gather together corporately here at Church and privately as we use the Word, studying it in our homes.

Oh, brothers and sisters, today Wisdom stands before us. Her maids, her mouth pieces cry out from pulpits, classrooms, workplaces and homes. Faith always listens. So, **WALK WITH WISDOM! WISDOM REQUIRES US TO KNOW WHO WE ARE AND WISDOM REQUIRES US TO LEAVE OUR WAYS AND FOLLOW HER.** What God requires in His Word, He supplies for you in Christ! Amen!