

Proverbs 9:1-6

Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars.
She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.
She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city.
“Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment.
“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.

Have you ever gone so long without eating that you didn't feel hungry anymore? Maybe you were working so hard on something that you didn't stop to take a break, and before you knew it, several hours had passed. Maybe it had even been a full day since you had last had a good meal, but even so, you just didn't feel hungry.

But even if you didn't feel hungry, chances are your body was in great need. And maybe it started trying to tell you what it needed in other ways. Maybe you got a headache, maybe you got grouchy, maybe you started feeling a little faint. Until finally, you sat down and had the big meal you needed, and you realized just how hungry you had been.

Sometimes our spiritual lives are like hungry stomachs. Over the past few Sundays, many of our Scripture readings have had to do with bread. We've seen how God gave the Israelites manna from heaven to eat as they wandered in the desert. We've seen how God sent an angel to give the prophet Elijah bread to eat when he was hungry. We've seen the miracle of Jesus feeding the five thousand. But in all of these readings, it's never been just about bread, has it? Although these accounts teach us that God does provide for our physical needs, if we look deeper we see that he provides for us spiritually too. In our gospel lesson today Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.”

And our Old Testament lesson, from the book of Proverbs, makes it even clearer: We are invited to eat and drink at the feast of God's wisdom, a feast where there will always be more than enough for everyone, a feast that we love coming back to.

God tells us that when it came to wisdom, aside from Jesus himself there was no one who was wiser than King Solomon. Wisdom was God's greatest gift to Solomon, and in his day he was famous for it. The kings and rulers of many distant lands came to see Solomon and to hear the wisdom that God put on his lips and in his heart. Even today, if we know someone who is very wise, we might say that they have “the wisdom of Solomon.”

What striking about King Solomon is what he did as a king. Normally, when you think of kings, you probably think of someone who rules over his people, who administrates the affairs of his kingdom, and who judges right and wrong. Solomon did all that, but on top of all of that he was also a great teacher. He taught others about animals of all kinds, he wrote about all kinds of plant life; he spoke three thousand proverbs and wrote over a thousand songs. Truly, King Solomon was a man of great wisdom, and he wasn't afraid to share his wisdom with others!

That's what the book of Proverbs is: It's a book of wisdom that Solomon wrote for his children to read so that they could gain wisdom too. But it's not just Solomon's wisdom that we read in the book of Proverbs. It's God's wisdom too, because like every other book in the Bible, the book of Proverbs was inspired by God. Ultimately, that's what separates divine, biblical wisdom from empty, worldly wisdom. True wisdom comes from God, and God *wants* to give it to us. He wants us to be wise in his ways, so he invites us to come and eat at his feast of wisdom.

As Solomon writes book of Proverbs, he portrays Wisdom as a beautiful and generous queen who is preparing a royal feast. She has built her palace, a strong and splendid palace, large enough for the whole world to come in when she calls. The banquet hall is prepared, the table set for a wondrous feast, the likes of which the world has never seen before. The tables are piled high with meats and fruits and baked breads, the cups flow with wine and milk and honey, and the air is filled with the smells of all that savory food. Are you getting hungry? Good! Because this feast isn't just meant for the wealthy. It's not just for her family and friends. You are invited! Wisdom's servants stand ready, and Queen Wisdom herself calls from the highest spires of the city, “Let all who are simple come in here!” To you and me and all the world, she cries out, “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.”

It's not just about food, is it? We're talking about a spiritual wisdom here. We're talking about the great feast of wisdom that God has prepared for us in his Holy Word. It's the wisdom of knowing that God is Lord over all things and that his law is good. It's the wisdom of knowing God's law, knowing right from wrong, and being able to apply it to our lives, being able to live it day to day. These are things that the world says we can't possibly know—but God invites us to know these things. That wisdom which remains hidden from the world, he reveals to us in the feast of his Holy Word.

We're probably all familiar with the phrase, “With age comes wisdom.” And that's true, isn't it? The longer a person lives, the more experience they have. They're probably able to avoid a lot of the trouble they got into when they were younger, just because they've been there before. And after many years of learning the Word of God and applying it and living it, we come to a greater understanding of God and his love for us. *With age comes wisdom.*

And yet people have also noticed that the longer you live, the more time you have for acting foolishly. We're never too old or too wise to make foolish mistakes and commit foolish sins. We all do it. And where the young and the foolish might sin because they don't know any better, the old and the wise might sin because they're set in their ways.

I mean, just look at the way we so often treat the wisdom of God. Wisdom cries aloud in the streets, she offers her feast to all who hunger, and we just walk right by. Perhaps the young say, “Wisdom? I don't need that. I've got other things that I need that are way more important. Besides, I've got plenty of time.” Maybe the old say, “Wisdom? Got plenty of that already. I've had a whole lifetime to learn, and I've gotten by pretty well with what I know.” So Wisdom cries aloud to us, our Savior invites us in, and we keep on walking, and we don't even realize how hungry we are.

Call it youth or age, call it too much foolishness or too much wisdom, call it whatever you want, but ultimately, it's all the same thing. It's all sin. It's all pride. Because if God's Word is wisdom, if God's will is wisdom, then anything that goes against it is foolishness. If we reject the call to receive the wisdom of God, it's nothing more than simple, sinful foolishness.

Wisdom's doors are always open, and she never stops calling out her invitation. That's why that invitation is so precious: If we still act foolishly, if we still walk in simple ways no matter how wise we get, then Wisdom's invitation always applies to us! If we never stop being fools, then Wisdom never stops wanting us to come and eat at her feast.

Because at the center of God's wisdom, at its very heart, is the eternal truth that God loves us and sent his only Son to be our bread of life. When we come to the feast of God's wisdom, we see how Jesus offered himself, his life, his very flesh and blood, to save us from every foolish sin. He gave his life on the cross and rose again to assure us that we have a place in God's banquet hall. He gives us his own body and blood to eat and drink in his Supper, to strengthen our faith and increase our wisdom and to grant us the forgiveness of all our sins.

When it comes down to it, eating and drinking are a perfect picture for how much we need the wisdom found in God's Word. You can't just decide not to eat. You need to keep doing it regularly. It's the same way with the Word. You can't just decide to give it up. You can't just decide you don't need it anymore. Our souls will always hunger, and God's Word will always be there to fill us up again.

God's wisdom always satisfies, my friends. No matter how much wisdom we may desire from him, God will always have more to give. No matter how much he gives, all of it is a feast for the soul. And the best news? You don't even have to wait for God to open his doors to eat of his wisdom. He has given his wisdom to the world in the pages of the Bible, proclaiming to all people the most precious wisdom that Jesus is more than enough to cover all of our sins!

In the Bible, God shows us how Jesus was even wiser than Solomon. He loved the wisdom of his Father. He loved hearing it and meditating on it. He loved preaching it and teaching it. He offered his wisdom to everyone who came to him. He loved God's wisdom so much that he followed it to the cross, suffering and dying there to cover all our sinful foolishness and make us wise for salvation. What a delight for the soul! What a delicious feast! Amen.