

**Proverbs 9:1-6** Wisdom has built her house. She has carved out her seven pillars. <sup>2</sup>She has prepared her meat. She has mixed her wine. She has already set her table. <sup>3</sup>She has sent out her servant girls. She calls from the highest point in the city, <sup>4</sup>“Whoever is naïve, let him turn in here.” To someone who lacks sense she says, <sup>5</sup>“Come, eat my food, and drink the wine that I have mixed. <sup>6</sup>Abandon your naïve ways and live. Travel the road to understanding.”

Today we are very blessed to be installing our new principal, Mr. Michael Chappell. We should thank God every day that we will not go so much as one class period without a principal. He has been well trained at Martin Luther Preparatory School and Martin Luther College. He has a lot of personal experience as a teacher and also as an early childhood administrator.

It's going to be quite a change all around. August 26 will be the very first class day where the Langes will not be involved in our school in any way, shape, or form. Last year Mr. Chappell was in charge of a group of preschoolers. Now he's going to be teaching the upper grades and being in charge of the entire school. We can be confident that this year will be another year of God's grace because we are carrying out his will and he has promised to bless us.

Mr. Chappell will be teaching a lot of different subjects. All of them are important to give our students a well-rounded education and prepare them for high school, whether it is at Michigan Lutheran Seminary or elsewhere. But there is one subject that is above them all—the Word of our God. That equips us for live now and eternally. Listen to True Wisdom. See what's prepared, listen to the invitation, and enjoy Wisdom's banquet.

The book of Proverbs was written by King Solomon, the son of King David, a man blessed by God with tremendous wisdom. Even though he wrote around 3,000 years ago, his words are just as valuable and applicable today as they were back then. After all, they aren't just his words. These are the words of God himself. This book has a lot of practical advice on how to live like a child of God in a world full of people who aren't.

The theme for this chapter and really for the entire book comes right after this text, “**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**” You can't even begin to have wisdom unless you first fear the LORD. The context makes it clear that he's not talking about being terrified of God. He is talking about respecting and honoring God for everything he has done and continues to do for us.

In this chapter Wisdom and Folly or Foolishness are personified as two women. Solomon will talk about Folly at the end of this chapter. This is how she is described, “**The woman Folly is boisterous. She is deluded. She knows nothing.**” She doesn't know what she is talking about, but that doesn't stop her from voicing her opinion anyway. We also see what the results are of listening to her, “**the souls of the dead are there...her guests are in the depths of hell.**”

Contrast that with true Wisdom, “**Wisdom has built her house. She has carved out her seven pillars. <sup>2</sup>She has prepared her meat. She has mixed her wine. She has already set her table.**” Everything is prepared and everything is in its place. There is some debate among commentators on the seven pillars. Perhaps it just means she has built a large house so she can welcome all kinds of people. Perhaps it is a reference to the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit that's spoken about many times in the Scriptures. It is also the Biblical number of completeness. Any of those work.

Many times in the Bible a banquet is used as a picture of all of the blessings that God wants to give to us now and eternally. For example the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “**On this mountain the LORD of Armies will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food, a banquet of aged wines, with the best cuts of meat, and with the finest wines.**” Jesus used that picture in a parable too, “**The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.**”

The planning and preparation are pictures of the planning and preparation our Almighty God has made in order to save us. There was no flying by the seat of his pants. Everything was well thought out. From eternity God knew that humanity was going to rebel against him. He knew that we would do the things that he hates the most. He understood that the only thing we would deserve from him is his anger and punishment.

That might be what we deserve, but that's not what God wanted to give us. So he came up with a plan. That plan involved our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He would provide God with the perfect life and the perfect payment for every sin. God's love is so boundless that he didn't just do this for a select group of people at a particular time in history in one specific location. His love is for everyone everywhere ever.

In the Gospel lesson for today Jesus used a striking picture. He talks about people eating his flesh. This is not a reference to Communion because it hadn't been instituted yet. It is a picture of believing. So also in this text eating the food and drinking the wine that Wisdom provides is a picture of believing in our Triune God. God gives us true Wisdom, confidence that we are forgiven, and real joy now and forever in heaven.

Listen to True Wisdom. See what's prepared and now listen to the invitation.

Once Wisdom's house has been built and all the preparations for the banquet have been completed, she calls out to people everywhere to join her. Back then there was no Internet to get the news out. There were no public address systems. But going to the highest part of the city would work great to get your message out. In case some can't hear her, she sends out her servants to bring the invitation directly.

Notice who she is inviting. She isn't just inviting important people, you know, the movers and shakers in the city. She is inviting people who are naïve. That word literally means "open." Their minds are open to all kinds of influences, both good and bad. They are like little children who trust everything that other people say until the time when they realize that it is unusual for people to be 100% truthful. They need Wisdom.

They are also described as "**someone who lacks sense.**" Literally they are people with lacking hearts. To the Hebrew mind, your heart was not the seat of your emotions like we think of it. It is where you get your ability to reason. If you don't have true Wisdom, you aren't going to be able to make any good decisions. God doesn't just invite "good" people. After all, no one is truly good on their own. I think of how God described the people of Nineveh to the Prophet Jonah. They "**do not know the difference between their right hand and their left.**"

It's always so interesting to me that the people who don't know anywhere near enough about a particular subject love to brag about how much they know. People who truly understand the subject also understand themselves. They realize how much more they have yet to learn. That's what believers should be like. We should never boast about how much we know about God's Word. That's a journey, not a destination.

Naïve and lacking sense are perfect ways to describe every human being in this world. We are born utterly clueless. We don't know God. We can't grasp why he wouldn't be tickled pink with how we live. We don't know who this Jesus guy is much less care about him. Satan could sidle up to us and say all kinds of things that sound like wisdom to our naïve ears, but it would just be foolishness that only can lead us to Hell.

So as long as this world goes on, God's invitation will keep going out. His invitation reached most of us when our parents brought us to church to be baptized. They knew we couldn't find God on our own, so they brought us to his waiting arms. Through the water and the Word our naivety and lack of sense were replaced with faith which is a firm, unshakable trust in Jesus as our Savior.

Like Wisdom used her servants to invite people in, so also God uses his people to invite the world to him. That's why we do what we do in this church. It is for one of two purposes: either to lead more people to their Savior or to educate them further once they have been brought to their Savior. If we are doing things at church that don't support one of those two goals, then we have to ask ourselves why we're doing it.

That is one of the blessings of our school too. We want to teach them more than just the three Rs. We want them to know the love that their Triune God has for them. Even if people don't feel a need for God themselves, they often see a need for it for their children. Through what they learn and through the example of the faculty and the school parents they can be led to know that Jesus is for them too.

Listen to True Wisdom. Listen to the invitation and finally enjoy Wisdom's banquet.

Maybe at some point you've had a light bulb moment. You struggle to understand some particular concept and then suddenly something clicks and you get it. One moment like that for me is when I finally understood music theory. I didn't understand how the major scale and minor scale were related to each other. Someone explained it to me using a piano and suddenly I was like, "Wow! Why in the world couldn't I figure that out before?"

It's not that I was stupid. Music theory is not something that most people have an innate grasp of. The same is true of God's Word. On my own I don't know what sin is. I don't understand how it is destroying me now and forever. Then God's Law shows sin for what it really is. Then we realize that all the pain we've ever felt, all the trouble that has ever come into our lives is all because of sin. For the first time we finally understand the problem.

Then we are ready to see God's perfect solution to our problem. That's what Jesus was trying to get through people's thick skulls in our Gospel lesson for today, "**For this is the will of my Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life. And I will raise him up on the Last Day.**"

Sadly the people then wanted to remain in their senselessness. By God's grace the Holy Spirit chipped away at our rock-hard skulls to lead us to know and believe that Jesus is our perfect Savior.

Wisdom tells us to **"Travel the road to understanding."** Knowing God's Word isn't like a subject in school where we studied for a semester exam and as soon as the exam was over we immediately began forgetting everything that we've ever learned. It's amazing how little I remember from chemistry class at MLS. It's not because I suddenly got dumb. I just haven't used it in my life. If you don't use it, you lose it.

That is definitely true of God's Word too. I don't want you to sit in those pews for an hour, nod your head in agreement with me, and then when you get home act as if you didn't hear a single thing I said. If my sermon was nothing more than "Clever Sayings with Pastor Arnold," then feel free to forget everything I said. But since I'm bringing God's Word to you, you should take it to heart because it is God's message to you.

I like the way both Greek and Hebrew picture people's lives as walking around. We talk about people's walk of life in English too. It shows that God's Word is not just something we know. It's something we live. We don't wait to listen to God again until next Sunday. We're in his Word every day. Every day we are taking what we learned and looking for new ways to apply it to our lives. There is nothing more practical for us than God's Word.

Wisdom also says, **"Abandon your naïve ways and live."** If we stay naïve to God's Word there is only one place where that leads. This life will be miserable. We will keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again. We will find new, self-destructive things to try. When this life comes to an end we would be in for a terrible shock when we stand before our Savior's judgment throne. He'd have to say those most terrible words to us, **"I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers."**

It doesn't have to be that way. Walking in God's Word means that we will be able to see those landmines that Satan has placed in our path and avoid them. When we fail, and we will more than we care to admit, instead of hiding from God like Adam and Eve did, we can go to him in repentance and know that he will forgive that sin too. We can look ahead to the day when we will join him and all the saints in eternal glory.

Listen to True Wisdom. See what's prepared, listen to the invitation, and enjoy Wisdom's banquet. May God be with Mr. Chappell as he makes his promises before God's altar now. May God bless him and all of us with the wisdom and understanding that can only come from his Word. May we always regard hearing God's Word as like being invited to a delicious banquet we can feast on forever.