

COME TO WISDOM'S BANQUET

Proverbs 9:1-6 | Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost | August 16/19, 2018

[Wisdom says,] "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight."

Jesus

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Imagine you receive an invitation to dinner at a fine restaurant. The invitation includes this menu:

- Appetizer: Steak-stuffed mushroom caps with a blue cheese crust.
- Salad: Fresh baby spinach topped with smoked bacon, asiago cheese, grilled onions, candied walnuts, and port-poached pears. Tossed with a bacon vinaigrette.
- Soup: French onion with gruyere cheese and toasted baguette.
- Main course: A ten-ounce filet mignon topped with Alaskan king crab meat, fresh asparagus, and hollandaise sauce.
- Wine: A nice cabernet from the Sonoma Valley.
- Dessert: Crème brûlée with Madagascar vanilla and a caramelized sugar crust.

I don't know about you, but my mouth is watering. That meal comes off the menu of Johnny Delmonico's Steakhouse in downtown Madison. If you were to order that meal it would cost you about \$120 per person plus tax and tip. So if someone invited you to such a meal and paid the bill, well, you could hardly refuse.

In the portion of his Word before us today our God invites us to a sumptuous meal. It's not a meal of surf and turf. It's a meal of wisdom and understanding. It's a meal that saves. And our God offers it to us free of charge. Through Solomon's Spirit-inspired pen our God calls to us today: COME TO WISDOM'S BANQUET. It's a banquet that has been carefully prepared. It's a banquet to which all are invited. It's a banquet that gives life.

I. A Banquet Carefully Prepared

Over the millennia mankind has had a lot to say on the topic of wisdom. Wise sayings of the learned have been collected and shared for centuries. But when it comes to religion, the best that the wisest philosophers and greatest thinkers of this world can come up with is that to get right with God we have to obey his laws. That's not wisdom. That's a death sentence. God offers a different kind of wisdom.

In our text wisdom is personified as a woman preparing a meal. Note the care with which she readies her home and prepares the meal for her guests. **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.** Wisdom prepares the place for the meal. A house with seven pillars is solid,

strong, not easily knocked down. Wisdom prepares the finest food. In Solomon's day a meal with meat was quite rare, reserved for the tables of the rich or for special occasions. Wisdom spares no expense. Wisdom even mixes the wine. In ancient Israel wine was often mixed with spices to improve the taste. A popular mix was honey and pepper. Wine, honey and pepper – none of those ingredients were cheap. Again, Wisdom is not stingy. She prepares a lavish meal of nutritious and delicious delicacies.

So what is this meal? What else can it be but God's holy Word, the only source of true wisdom? It is the law which crushes us under the guilt of our sins and the gospel which directs us to our Savior's cross and the good news of the forgiveness he won for us there. Jesus himself, quoting from the Old Testament said, **"Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"** (Matthew 4:4). God's Word is a banquet of rich food for the soul, carefully prepared for us.

If only we always treated it that way! God offers a delicious and nutritious meal, but often we act as if it's a Hot Pocket or some slop from a can. We turn up our noses at it as if it just isn't good enough. Smart phones and remote controls are worn from use, but the Bible sits in a lonely corner like a knick-knack which we notice and dust off once in a while.

That's at home. What about here? There are often lots of empty pews in our sanctuary, especially during the summer.

Why is it that God's Word often just can't find an audience? Is the message not applicable? Is the preacher boring? "I'm too busy," is the most common excuse. You know what? If we're too busy to hear God's Word then we are too busy. God's Word is the priority. Some other area of our busy lives needs to be adjusted.

In spite of our apathy, like a faithful mom who keeps calling her picky kids to the dinner table, the God of grace never stops inviting us to the banquet. And not just us. Everyone.

II. A Banquet to which All are Invited

[Wisdom] has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city. "Let all who are simple come to my house!" She calls out to **"those who have no sense."** Who are "the simple" and "those who have no sense"? That's you and me and all people. By nature we are spiritually blind, totally lacking in the wisdom that saves. What does the God of grace and wisdom do about this? He sends out messengers to call from the highest point of the city so that all may hear. In the past he sent apostles and prophets and kings to proclaim his Word. He still sends pastors and teachers, counselors and Christians friends to invite us to the banquet of his grace. Why does he do this? Because he is the God **who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth** (1 Timothy 2:4). Because he is the God who says, **"I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live"** (Ezekiel 33:11).

My friends, if God wants all people to be saved – and he does – that means he wants *you* to be saved. If God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son – and he did – that means he loves *you* and sent his Son for *you*. If Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world – and he is – that means his death on the cross paid for *your* sins. And *mine* too.

This is great news! God wanted you to be saved and sent his Son to make sure that you are saved. And now he invites you to his banquet of wisdom so that you can feast on this good news. He invites you to the banquet of his Word which is able to make you **wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus** (2 Timothy 3:15). He invites you to the banquet that gives life.

III. A Banquet that Gives Life

This world offers so many invitations and so many promises. *Buy the “Abdominizer” and women will go crazy for your six-pack abs. Drive our luxury sedan and you’ll be the envy of all your friends. Invest with our company and you’ll be set up for life. Believe in yourself and you’ll find success and true happiness. It doesn’t matter what you believe, just believe in something. Be the best person you can be, do your best not to hurt anyone and God will accept you.* Like the Sirens of Greek mythology, worldly wisdom calls to us. If we listen, we’ll end up dashed to pieces on the rocks.

Yes, the ways and wisdom of this world lead only to destruction and death. We need to listen to the call of godly wisdom: **“Come, eat my food and drink the wine**

that I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live.” The nutritious food and rich wine of God’s Word give life. Apart from the Word there is no life – only death.

Only in God’s Word do we find the truth of Jesus our Savior. Paul tells us that in Jesus **are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge** (Colossians 2:3). God’s plan of salvation is something that man never would have dreamed of in a million years. God had to reveal it to us. He does in his Word. In this Word he tells us of a Savior who left his heavenly throne and almighty power behind for a time, so that he could walk in our flesh, in our place under God’s law. On the pages of Holy Scripture, and only on those pages, do we find out about a Savior whose walk was perfect at every point and a God who credits that perfect record to our account as if we have walked in perfect obedience. Only in the Holy Bible do we find out about the God-man who shed his priceless blood, gave up his precious life and miraculously took it back again to conquer our enemies – sin, death and Satan. Only in the Word of God do we hear the gracious invitation, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved”** (Acts 16:34).

“Faith comes from hearing the message” (Romans 10:17). So don’t forget the Banquet! Meat and potatoes and vegetables feed our bodies and keep us alive. The food and drink of God’s Word feeds our souls. The Word is food that brings life – spiritual life and eternal life.

Keeping all this in mind, friends, don't ignore Wisdom's call. Don't reject your invitation to the banquet of life. None of us would consider going a day without eating just because we had better things to do. How much less should we starve ourselves spiritually by ignoring God's Word because there are "better" things to do!

In thanks for God's love in Christ, rejoice in his invitation and come to the banquet. Feast on his Word in worship and Bible study. Bring your kids to our school and Sunday school. Feed your soul through regular Bible reading. Have devotions with your spouse and family as often as you can. Taste and see that the Lord is good!

Filet mignon. Maine lobster. Turtle cheesecake. Just hearing those words makes our mouths water and our stomachs growl. May God grant us an even greater appetite for his Word! It doesn't just taste good. It gives joy that never ends. It doesn't just feed our bodies. It nurtures our souls. It doesn't just keep us alive for a little while. It gives life to the full now and forever. Yes, my friends, God has prepared a feast of salvation in his Word. And your name is on the invitation. Come to wisdom's banquet! Amen.

S.D.G.