

I.N.I.

12th Sunday after Pentecost
Aug. 19, 2012
Prov. 9:1-6, 10, 13-18

In Christ Jesus, Who is the Wisdom of God and Who proclaims that Wisdom through His Word,
Dear Fellow Redeemed,

ILC begins their 2012-2013 school year tomorrow. Our school begins next week Wednesday and by the day after Labor Day most all schools in our country will be in session. And what will these schools be doing? Hopefully they will teach our children---teach our children the basics---reading, writing and arithmetic---and more. But will they teach our children wisdom?

Our entire service today is directed to this one main thought of **WISDOM**. Our hymns this morning speak of wisdom, our scripture readings and this sermon text has as its main thought **WISDOM** and our prayers this morning have **WISDOM** as the basis. In fact the whole book of Proverbs speaks of **WISDOM**. The theme of this book is found in verse 10 of our text: **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM. AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ONE IS UNDERSTANDING.**

This morning's text is part of a section that summarizes the thoughts that were developed in the first 8 chapters of Proverbs. In those chapters Solomon has encouraged the reader to walk in the way of wisdom. And in those chapters Solomon personifies wisdom as a woman. In 3:13-18 we read: **HAPPY IS THE MAN WHO FINDS WISDOM, AND THE MAN WHO GAINS UNDERSTANDING; FOR HER PROCEEDS ARE BETTER THAN THE PROFITS OF SILVER; AND HER GAIN THAN FINE GOLD. SHE IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN RUBIES, AND ALL THE THINGS YOU MAY DESIRE CANNOT COMPARE WITH HER. LENGTH OF DAYS IS IN HER RIGHT HAND, IN HER LEFT HAND RICHES AND HONOR. HER WAYS ARE WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS, AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE. SHE IS A TREE OF LIFE TO THOSE WHO TAKE HOLD OF HER, AND HAPPY ARE ALL WHO RETAIN HER.**

God's definition of **WISDOM** is not mere head knowledge or learned facts. It is not a skill in applying your mental abilities to a problem. **WISDOM** is the knowledge of who God is and what He has done for mankind. This **WISDOM** is only found in His Word.

As we mentioned chapter 9 sums up the thoughts of Solomon from the beginning of this book of wise sayings. In this chapter Solomon describes for us the difference between the way of **WISDOM** and the way of **FOLLY**. The way of **WISDOM** is described in verses 1-6 and the way of **FOLLY** is described in verses 7-12. Solomon encourages us to examine our way of life and to make sure that we follow the proper way, the way that will be a lifelong and everlasting blessing to us.

There are two significant story lines in our text. The one is the banquet that is being prepared by both **WISDOM AND FOLLY**. The second is the invitation made by both. This morning we are going to examine both the banquets and the invitations by asking the question:

WHOSE INVITATION WILL YOU LISTEN TO: WISDOM OR FOLLY?

1) THEY BOTH SOUND GREAT.

Let's compare these two invitations and banquets and see if this statement we just made is true. Do they both sound great? We read verses 1-2 **WISDOM HAS BUILT HER HOUSE, SHE HAS HEWN OUT HER SEVEN PILLARS; SHE HAS SLAUGHTERED HER MEAT, SHE HAS MIXED HER WINE. SHE HAS ALSO FURNISHED HER TABLE.**

We see that **WISDOM** is truly concerned with preparing the best banquet for our benefit. **WISDOM** builds her own house; prepares her own sumptuous meal of meat and wine; and even sets

her own table. This is all a picture of the preparations of God's gracious plan of salvation for mankind. God has carefully, meticulously prepared everything.

The house is built. The **SEVEN PILLARS** indicate that this is indeed a large house. We are reminded of Jesus' words, **IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS; IF IT WERE NOT SO I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU.**

Next comes the preparation of the food. **WISDOM** prepares her own food. Literally the Hebrew reads; **SHE HAS SLAUGHTERED HER SLAUGHTERING.** This describes the killing and the preparation of the animal for eating. We are reminded of the same Hebrew word used in Isaiah 53:7 about the Messiah, Jesus: **HE WAS LED AS A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER.** The slaughter of Jesus as the Lamb of God for the sins of the world, is the most vital part of the preparation God makes for our eternal banquet.

WISDOM also mixes her own wine. Here there are two thoughts. Wine was mixed with spices to make the meal as tasty as possible. We see in this banquet a picture of the eternal salvation God has prepared for all people. The mixing of the wine can also be seen as Christ's shedding of His blood for us even as the slaughtered animal is a picture of the Crucified Christ.

Everything is now ready and the invitation goes out. We read verses 3-6 **SHE HAS SENT OUT HER MAIDENS, SHE CRIES OUT FROM THE HIGHEST PLACES OF THE CITY, "WHOEVER IS SIMPLE, LET HIM TURN IN HERE!" AS FOR HIM WHO LACKS UNDERSTANDING, SHE SAYS TO HIM, "COME, EAT OF MY BREAD AND DRINK OF THE WINE WHICH I HAVE MIXED. FORSAKE FOOLISHNESS AND LIVE, AND GO IN THE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING.**

WISDOM not only sends out maidens to proclaim the banquet is ready, she herself cries out **FROM THE HIGHEST PLACES OF THE CITY.** She wants everyone to come because she is truly concerned for all.

Here we clearly see the picture of Christ's call to mankind that He made while He was here on earth, and the call that He continually makes through His Word by means of His called servants, YOU and ME included. Jesus said to all of us: **GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE.**

WISDOM'S invitation is to all those who are **SIMPLE** and **LACK UNDERSTANDING.** Literally the word **simple** means naive, inexperienced, easily enticed. **WISDOM** is interested in all people, especially those who realize they have no real wisdom on their own, apart from God.

We have examples of this invitation throughout Scripture. Isaiah 55:1 **"HO! EVERYONE WHO THIRSTS, COME TO THE WATERS; AND YOU WHO HAVE NO MONEY, COME, BUY AND EAT. YES, COME BUY WINE AND MILK WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE.** In Matt. 11:28 we read Jesus' words, **COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.** In Rev. 22:17 we read, **AND THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, "COME!" AND LET HIM WHO HEARS SAY, "COME!" AND LET HIM WHO THIRSTS COME. AND WHOEVER DESIRES, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY.**

Jesus showed His concern for the outcasts of society, for the sinners, for those without wisdom. He did so not by joining them in their sins, or condoning their actions, but by lifting them up out of their sins with forgiveness and the power of the Gospel to turn their back on their former lifestyle of sin.

We now look at **FOLLY'S** invitation and banquet. We read verses 14-17 **FOR SHE SITS AT THE DOOR OF HER HOUSE, ON A SEAT BY THE HIGHEST PLACES OF THE CITY, TO CALL TO THOSE WHO PASS BY, WHO GO STRAIGHT ON THEIR WAY:**

“WHOEVER IS SIMPLE, LET HIM TURN IN HERE”; AND AS FOR HIM WHO LACKS UNDERSTANDING, SHE SAYS TO HIM, “STOLEN WATER IS SWEET, AND BREAD EATEN IN SECRET IS PLEASANT.”

FOLLY does not go out of her way to find the lost for she has no real concern for people. Instead she lays a trap for all those who venture near her house, who **GO STRAIGHT ON THEIR WAY**, in other words who are minding their own business. What a scary picture of the very real danger of this world’s allurements.

Folly’s invitation is the same as **Wisdom’s**: **“WHOEVER IS SIMPLE, LET HIM TURN IN HERE.”** But her attitude toward those who hear her call is entirely different. She considers them only suckers who have fallen for her trap. This is clearly seen by the banquet she promises to give. Nothing substantial or nourishing is offered, no meat or wine only bread and water. Who would want that? But did you hear the enticement? This is **STOLEN WATER AND BREAD EATEN IN SECRET**.

The temptation to do something contrary to the law, something that is sinful makes **stolen water and bread** seem even more appealing than more succulent **meat and wine**. Adam and Eve had all of the fruit in the world to eat, but when told by Satan that the forbidden fruit was really good for them, in fact better than what God had given them, there was the desire to take what wasn’t rightfully to be taken.

We see that also today. We are led to believe that it is so much more thrilling to live outside the law, to do what we’ve been told not to do, to live on the wild side of life. Underage drinking, getting high on drugs, sex before marriage, adulterous affairs, cheating to get ahead all may seem more exciting than living the obedient life, but what does following that kind of lifestyle produce? Nothing but **DEATH!**

II: LOOK AT WHAT IS BEHIND THE INVITATIONS.

III: THINK ABOUT THE END RESULT.

We see that in reality both banquets and invitations do not sound so great after all. For when we look at what is behind these invitations we see that one clearly leads to **LIFE** the other to **DEATH**.

In verse 6 **WISDOM** declares **FORSAKE FOOLISHNESS AND LIVE, AND GO IN THE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING**.

To the one who listens to **Folly’s** invitation we read in verse 18 **BUT HE DOES NOT KNOW THAT THE DEAD ARE THERE, THAT HER GUESTS ARE IN THE DEPTHS OF HELL**.

What a blessed eternal future on the one hand and what an eternally fearful future on the other. We are the simple, those who by nature lack understanding, lack the wisdom of God because of our sinful hearts and darkened minds.

Come to His Word, to His Wisdom in our worship services, in our adult Bible Classes, in our Sunday School, in our Christian Day School, in your own daily and family Bible readings. Come, hear the message of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Come to know the way of salvation. Learn that **ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALLEN SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD...THAT THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE**. That because of our sins we deserve only eternal death and damnation. Come to also hear the Good News that Jesus Christ has prepared a blessed meal for us. He sacrificed Himself, He was the slaughtered Lamb on the cross who died as our Substitute, in our place. He paid the penalty of our sins: damnation. He rose again and has promised us that He will daily feed us a meal that will truly nourish and strengthen our souls, His Powerful Word.

But the folly of the world is also calling. Unsuspectingly, we walk by, minding our own business and the world calls out to us, **“Turn in here, listen to my wisdom, follow my ways. For my ways and wisdom is far more exciting.”** So some follow their reason of the empty philosophies of this world

which elevates man above God, others follow after the lust of their eyes and flesh, others simply disregard God's moral laws and set up their own standards of what's right and wrong for themselves. And still others believe that they can attain salvation and eternal life by their own works.

One of the greatest concerns we should have as parents, is that our children do not get caught up in the folly, the foolishness of this world. The folly of drug and alcohol abuse, the folly of choosing their own morality in regard to sex, the folly of following the world's wisdom of humanism and evolutionism, the folly of living for oneself.

Many an unsuspecting Christian has passed by the house of **Folly** and thought it was a house of great learning and listened to its invitation and ate of its stolen water and bread and starved to death spiritually. There are spiritually dead men's bones everywhere, littering the countryside.

God's Word says, **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY ONE IS UNDERSTANDING.** Reverence, respect for the Lord God and His Word is real wisdom which leads to real life. Knowing that our Heavenly Father planned our salvation and sent His Son to accomplish it---that is real understanding that leads to real freedom.

Jesus said to His disciples, **IF YOU ABIDE IN MY WORD, YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES INDEED. AND YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE.** The truth of God's **WISDOM** sets us free, the lies of this world's **FOLLY** leads us to slavery and death.

What's the answer to our concern for our children's future? What's the answer for our own awareness so we are not shanghaied by **FOLLY**?

KNOW THE WORD. Don't just know that God has given us His Word, but know that Word. Unfortunately many Christians are biblically illiterate. That means that they know the Bible is God's Word and is important for them, but they don't know what the Bible says. They don't know the Bible lessons and the doctrines and the many, many comforting truths therein, because they don't or won't take the time to read and study God's Word.

Our greatest concern for our children's future and our own must be spiritual. The Bible gives a very clear warning, **WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED IF HE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSES HIS OWN SOUL?**

What will your answer be? To whom will you listen---to **WISDOM OR FOLLY**? Those who follow after the **Folly** of this world become slaves to sin and are doomed to eternal death and hell. Those who listen to the **Wisdom** of God: Jesus Christ and His Word are led to forsake their sins and reject the **Folly** of this world and live alone with repentant hearts of faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. There alone, in Jesus and His Word, is **real WISDOM, real KNOWLEDGE and real LIFE!**

Let us rise and join together in reading Hymn 366: 5, 7

Amen.