

*Pastor Shaun Arndt*

*August 22, 2021*

*Sermon Text: Proverbs 9:1-6*

*"Christian Education: Come to the Feast!"*

*O Taste and see that the LORD is good. Amen.*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

There's always that *one* student. Maybe it was a friend or a classmate, a niece or nephew. Maybe it was you. You know, that one student in school, who when you ask what is their favorite class, they answer: "Lunch!"

When it comes to Christian Education, in a certain way, that student has the right idea! Our lesson from Proverbs helps us see Christian education is not merely a quest for knowledge or just an academic endeavor. It is not about personal advancement or learning some information that might be useful someday.

To use the words of our lesson, Christian Education is a meal, it is food for the soul that is just as essential for our spiritual well-being as literal food is for our bodies! And our Lord is not stingy, but is so gracious, so generous, so lavish, that He does not give us spiritual bread and water, but invites us to **Come to the Feast!**

The book of Proverbs from which our lesson comes, is all about wisdom. That is, *true wisdom*. The wisdom that comes from God that has nothing do to with head knowledge, intelligence, IQ level or natural human ability. *This* is how the Bible defines wisdom: **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding** (Proverbs 9:10).

So in God's eyes, what makes a person wise is faith. It is believing what God says about sin and its punishment, taking him seriously, but it is also knowing Him as the gracious Savior God who gave His Son to save us! That godly wisdom is centered in the good news of Jesus' saving us is made clear by the way the New Testament calls Jesus **the wisdom of God** (1 Corinthians 1:24) and says **all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in (Christ)** (Colossians 2:3).

Jesus' saving mission and the Holy Spirit's gift of faith makes us children of God and equips us for a wise life that trusts God's promises and wants to do what He says is right.

But where will you find this true wisdom? Must you climb to the top of a mountain and learn from some wise guru there? Does it come from a long journey of self-discovery?

No! Not at all. Listen to our lesson describe how freely and graciously God gives this wisdom and how it even seeks after us: **Wisdom has built her house. She has prepared her meat. She has mixed her wine. She has already set her table. She has sent out her servant girls. She calls from the highest point in the city,**

**Wisdom** is pictured as a woman who has prepared a meal, a **feast**. Wisdom is likely called a **she** because the Hebrew language God gave these words to us in, like other languages assigns a gender to certain words, and wisdom in Hebrew is a feminine noun. We still have traces of this in English, like when we usually call a boat a 'she'.

But I think there's something else going on here. I think it's because the picture is something we've likely all experienced, a picture that is pretty universal to our human experience. It's the picture of a mom or grandma on a special occasion, welcoming the family to a table packed with delicious, home cooked food. You know, that way how moms and grandmas show their love by cooking for and feeding their family in the way that only moms and grandmas can do!

And so these verse picture an amazing **feast** of **meat and mixed wine**! I know we are used to having meat quite often, but in ancient times, the majority of people would never eat meat every day. No, **meat** was a rare treat saved for special occasions. In the same way, **wine mixed** with special flavors and spices was not an everyday drink. **Mixed wine** is a 3,000 year old way of saying a bottle of the *good stuff*, the very best!

Picture it like the very best thanksgiving dinner ever, in a warm, inviting house, with a gracious loving hostess with the best food and drink and plenty of it! The kind of meal where if you go hungry, it's your own fault!

But what's a feast have to do with Christian education? Let Psalm 119 answer that as it speaks about God's Word: **How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!** (v. 103)

1 Peter also speaks of God's Word as food when it says: **Like newborn babies, crave the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow up with the result being salvation** (2:2). The book of Hebrews calls Christian teaching **milk** and **solid food** (Hebrews 5). For several weeks we have read from John 6, where Jesus calls Himself **the Bread of Life**.

The Word of God, the foundation and whole point of Christian education is the **feast** the Holy Spirit uses to create, strengthen and nourish the true **Wisdom** of faith in Jesus. God's Word does not merely teach us lessons about God, it's more than that, it's where God himself comes to us and feeds our souls with forgiveness, peace and eternal life, just as Jesus says in today's Gospel: **The one who feeds on me will live because of me**.

Food keeps our bodies alive. In the same way, through Word and Sacrament, Jesus feeds our faith and nourishes our souls to trust in Him alone for eternal life.

Food gives our bodies energy. In the same way the promises of God's Word equip the new hearts God has given to us to eagerly follow what He says is right as we live as His grateful people. What an amazing, saving and practical **feast** we have in God's Word in Christian Education in all its forms!

If your stomach is growling and you have a delicious meal set in front of you, would you say: "Oh great, now I have to do one more thing, now I have to sit at the table, pick up a fork and have to eat this incredible food." No! How silly that would be!

So let us not view hearing and learning God's Word that's way either. Hearing and learning God's Word is not *one* more thing for us to do, but a rich and delightful **feast** where the Lord himself is feeding us!

Think of what we do here in church for example. We call it a worship service, mainly because this is where *the Lord serves* us with His **feast** of Word and Sacrament. The Savior God is the chef and host who feeds us with His promises as the words of the Bible are read, spoken and remembered, and as Jesus in a most personal way, feeds us one by one with His body and blood in the Lord's Supper.

Let us view every way God's Word is taught throughout the day in Christian schools, in Bible class, Sunday School, in family devotions and personal Bible readings as a meal where God Himself invites you to **Come to the Feast!**

Now, have you ever heard someone say, “I had lunch when I was a kid, so I don’t need to eat food anymore.” “I ate everything I needed to eat back when I was in eighth grade, so I don’t need to have food ever again.” Ludicrous right!?

So again, let us not do so with the food of God’s Word! Let’s not think that because we learned something back in Sunday school, that we don’t need to hear it again. Let us never think: ‘I learned everything I need to know back in Confirmation class, why would I need to come to a Bible class or keep learning from the Bible?’

You see even the basics of our Christian faith aren’t just facts to be learned, but rather food for our souls that we need to feed on again and again. If you don’t eat food for your body, you will grow weak and die. Without the food of food of God’s Word our faith will grow weak and die. That’s why our lesson so urgently urges us to enjoy the feast God prepares in His Word: **Come, eat... and drink... Abandon your naïve ways and live.**

Wait, us, **naïve**? **Naïve** means foolish, gullible, easily deceived, unexperienced.

Yup, that describes our natural spiritual condition when we enter this world dead in sin and unbelief.

And because we still have a weak sinful nature within, this still describes us. Just think how often we are easily deceived by the devil’s lies and temptations and plunge into the same old sins again and again: pride and arrogance, or fear and worry, neglecting God’s Word, failing to always act like God’s Word is every bit as essential for our souls as food is for our bodies, and the list could go on.

So be amazed along with me that the Lord hasn’t said, that’s it, I’m done with you sinful ingrates, get out of my house! No, instead in grace and mercy higher than the heavens are above the earth He welcomes us to His table of His saving Word and in the words of lesson invites us: **“Come, eat my food, and drink the wine that I have mixed.”**

God, your dear Father says, “Here, dear child, feed upon the forgiveness my Son gives you with His death in your place that paid for every last sin. See, my dear Son Jesus, Risen from the Dead lives eternally and is here present to feed still present to feed you with His promises and fill you up with His **righteousness**. The perfection you lack, my Son Jesus provides. Though you were dead in sin, my Holy Spirit has made you alive through faith in Christ.”

Oh how richly God feeds you as His child and guest! In your baptism, the Lord set you a place with your name on it at His rich banquet table. This very day, Jesus has prepared the finest cut of meat, the best wine, and the sweetest desserts in the forgiveness of sins and by all He did to save you.

And so He will also bring you and all His believing people, well fed on His forgiving promises to sit at that perfect and glorious feast in the joys of everlasting life: **the wedding supper of the Lamb**. Dear friends, let us eagerly, always, often, **Come to the Feast**. Amen.

*O give thanks to the Lord, for His mercy endures forever. Amen.*

*We use the Apostles' Creed on page 7 of our worship folder, once again dining upon the saving deeds of our God it describes.*

If you have not had a chance yet to fill out a connection card from the seat in front of you, we ask that you would please do so and then place that completed card in one of the baskets near the doors as you exit this morning.