

Wisdom's Invitation

Proverbs 9:1-6

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Today our message is taken from Proverbs 9:1-6, which in the New American Standard translation reads as follows

Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars; She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; She has also set her table; She has sent out her maidens, she calls From the tops of the heights of the city: "Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says, "Come, eat of my food, And drink of the wine I have mixed. "Forsake your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding."

The wisest of all men, Solomon, presents wisdom in Proverbs 9:1-6 as a woman who, having built a house, prepared food and set a table, she sends out young women to invite the naive and those lacking in understanding to her house. She has said, "Come eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding." It is an invitation sounded from the height of the city, an invitation offered to all.

Isn't it sad that today, in an age when the pursuit of "the good life" occupies so much of our energy, we place little value on wisdom. Yes, I agree. There "is a lot of emphasis placed on getting a proper education. In fact, the importance of having a good education increases every year. But there seems a great deal more interest in acquiring knowledge than in learning what to do with it. Wisdom and knowledge are not the same. Wisdom is the use of knowledge, how it is applied. Wisdom comes after knowledge; it depends on having knowledge. Acquiring wisdom takes time; it develops by experience. Each succeeding generation of young people may, in fact, be better educated and have greater knowledge, but those who are older, the very ones we so often will not listen to, have, by reason of their age and experience, the greater wisdom.

Here in Proverbs 9 wisdom invites and graciously offers to give to all who will respond to the invitation. She invites her guests to proceed in the way of understanding, the way of wisdom. And, therein is the true nature of the wisdom from above. James explains in the last few verses of chapter three that there is wisdom of men and wisdom from above. God's wisdom is a gift given to those who prize her. Remember the words of James 1:5? "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously, and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

Solomon goes on in verse 13 of Proverbs 9 and following to tell of another invitation, an invitation of the foolish woman, a woman of folly, who stands in contrast to the lady called wisdom in the first part of the chapter. Later, the Lord willing, we will consider some thoughts prompted by this contrast.