

Proverbs 9:1-6  
“Walk in the Way of Wisdom”  
13<sup>th</sup> Sunday af. Pentecost

19 August 2018  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Rev. Larry Lemke

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

A Calvin and Hobbes cartoon portrayed Calvin filling a water balloon. He says, “In order to determine if there is any universal moral law beyond human invention, I have devised the following test: Unless I receive some sign within the next 30 seconds that I shouldn’t do it, I will hit Suzie Derkins with this water balloon.” At that point he stops and waits for the sign, which both we and he know will never come. Finally he shouts, “That’s it! That proves that there is no universal law.” What happens next is predictable: Calvin hits Suzie with the water balloon. She chases him across two frames and beats him to a pulp, at which point he says, “*Why does the universe always give you a sign after you do it?*”

The point of our text is that the God who governs the universe has NOT waited to give us a sign till after the deed is done. We will know what He expects of us in advance of our actions, before we experience the consequences, if we respond to the invitation of our text to:

### **Walk in the Way of Wisdom**

The problem is that in this world of sin, wisdom is not easy to come by. Indeed, many who think themselves to be wise, according to the Scriptures, are the most foolish. Only when we confess our utter foolishness do we begin to become wise. Often people attempt to gain wisdom through “trial and error,” doing foolish things, perhaps over and over, and then suffering for it, in order to learn the foolishness of it. This is what led Calvin to say, “*Why does the universe always give you a sign after you do it?*”

But the Scriptures, the Word of our God, offer a better solution. It is the solution of faith. It is the solution of forgiveness. It is the solution of life in God’s Kingdom.

In order to acquire wisdom at the invitation of our text, we will do three things; First, we will attempt to understand what Wisdom is and where it comes from. Second, we will see what stands in the way of wisdom. Third, we will see

what God has done to make us wise so that we can “walk in the way of understanding [wisdom] and live wisely.

## **I. What Wisdom is and where does it come from?**

What is wisdom and where does it come from? Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines “wise” as a ‘way of being or acting...discerning and judging soundly concerning what is true or false, proper or improper;’ This agrees with the portrayal of wisdom in Proverbs. “Wisdom” and “understanding” are a way of living – by faith. The wise, by their conduct, reveal fear of the Lord and knowledge of Him and His will. Paul describes it well when he writes in Ephesians 1:9-10) **“He poured out even more of this grace on us by giving us every kind of wisdom and understanding, when he made known to us the mystery of his will...It was His purpose in Christ to manage everything in heaven and on earth in such a way that, when the right time would come, all things would be organized under Christ as its head.”** True wisdom is knowing God’s Will and doing it as we learn of Christ and as we learn to work together in God’s kingdom

Wisdom is God’s gift which leads to works. Paul says in I Corinthians 1:23-24 **“We preach Christ crucified. To the Jews this is a stumbling block and to the Greeks it is foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, He is Christ, God’s power and God’s wisdom.”** So true wisdom comes with knowing Christ, with being called to faith in Christ by God. This faith will make a difference in a person’s life. God says through Ezekiel: [11:19-20] **I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them: I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people and I will be their God.”**

God has fulfilled this promise; that’s what the Pentecost season is all about. We say with Luther in his explanation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article of the Apostles’ Creed: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, nor come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called...enlightened...sanctified and kept me in the one true faith.”

## **II. What Stands in the Way of Wisdom?**

What stands in the way of wisdom as I seek to live wisely by faith and grow in wisdom? The obvious answer is sin. It is the ‘simple ways’ of which Solomon speaks in our text: **“leave your simple ways and you will live: walk in the way of understanding.”**

- What stands in the way are my own sinful thoughts, desires and deeds which are contrary to God's will.
- What stands in the way is the foolishness of the world and our flesh which desires to lead us away from God and away from true wisdom.

A less obvious answer is that the more we search for wisdom on our own, using our fallen reason, the further we are from finding it. As Paul says in I Corinthians 3:18 **“Do not deceive yourself. If any one of you imagines he is wise in the ways of this world, he should become a fool to become really wise. For God considers this world's wisdom to be foolishness...Rather, as Paul says, “You belong to Christ.”**

This is all because we like Calvin looking for a universal sign or Adam & Eve in the garden seeking after wisdom to be ‘like God’; we look for wisdom by following the ways of this world, by disobeying God's will

That's the bad news, but it leads to the good news. Adam and Eve tried the fruit in the garden, disobeyed God, and fell into sin; we all have sinned and fallen far short of the glory of God. But God sent his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is, as Paul says, **“the power of God and the wisdom of God.”** And He came to forgive us and empower us with His Spirit that we might walk in the way of wisdom, living our lives to His praise and glory.

### **III. What God has done to make us wise**

God has given us His Son Jesus Christ. Paul says, **“Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God...who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”** “Yes, God's Son redeemed us from our foolish and ignorant ways by going to the cross in payment for our sins and rising to life to assure us of his victory for us.

What has God done for us to make us wise? He has given us the means of grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, and through them we receive both God's invitation and his nourishment. Wisdom calls to us, as our text states: **“Come, eat my food...and you will live!”** Jesus extends his invitation in our Gospel lesson for today: **“Eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood...the one who feeds on me will live because of me...whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”**

And so, instructed by God's Word, led by His Spirit, we **“understand what God's will is,”** and in loving response and thankfulness to God we walk in the way of wisdom. Wisdom's Call to us today is to heed the invitation of Jesus to **“feed on me and to live because of me.”**

- As we gather together around His Word and share in the Sacrament of his body and blood;
- as we sit together in bible classes and Sunday school and Confirmation classes and
- as we pray together in worship and in our homes with our families, we answer that call – and in so doing, learn to walk in the way of wisdom.

May God keep us faithful in that walk, now and always. **Amen.**