

Sermon, Deacon David Martin
Sunday, August 19, 2018
Proverbs 9:1-6/Ephesians 5:15-20
Theme: Wise Up

There are a lot of people in this world who need to wise up!

Our readings from both the Old and New Testaments today talk about wisdom.

From the book of Proverbs, we learn that Wisdom is a female – no surprise there. She has built a house, made a meal, set the table, and sent her friends out to invite people to a party which sounds absolutely fabulous.

And wisdom isn't interested in dinner guests who have their act together. Instead, she wants the simple and those without sense to come and eat her bread and drink her wine. She wants her guests to set aside their immaturity. Let's look at that guest list, shall we? Wisdom invites people who are simple, without sense, and immature.

There is an abundance of current topical humor I could insert here. I'm sure we all have a few people – especially public figures - in mind who we feel are simple, without sense, and immature. People who could benefit from a dinner with Wisdom.

In our second reading, Paul writes to his friends in Ephesus. He counsels them on how they should live. Paul tells the young Christians to live as wise people – not as unwise people. Well, duh, Paul. Does anyone truly INTEND to live as an unwise person – someone who is simple, without sense, and immature? Of course not! But how many of us do exactly that? How many of us go through life making unwise choices?

Making decisions which do not serve us as we work toward the goals we have set.

Failing to live up to our full potential out of fear or laziness?

I think we agree we can be unwise – but why? Surely that isn't our goal.

Paul warns his friends that the days are evil and they should not be foolish. Evil days? People being foolish? That sounds extremely familiar. It seems like this letter written in the first century can speak to us today. Again, we can all name some people we think are foolish and are making our current days evil.

There are lot of people in this world who need to wise up. But I think maybe it's time for US to wise up.

That lady, Wisdom, invited simple and immature guests to her party. How quick are we to look around and judge other people as simple - without sense - immature. Those people need to attend such a dinner party.

But then we hear the reason Wisdom wants us to have dinner with her. She has invited her guests over so they may live and walk in the way of insight.

Live and walk in the way of insight?

Cancel my previous dinner reservations. I want to go to THIS dinner party. Forget snarky comments about celebrities and politicians. If the purpose of the party is to get some insight, I'll be the first to arrive and the last to leave.

Maybe it's ME who needs to wise up.

Paul tells the Ephesians they should be wise because the days are evil and can cause them to make foolish choices. We can certainly rattle off a list of fools we know. But then we learn Paul's guide to help us become wise.

We must understand the will of God. We shouldn't fill ourselves with earthly pleasures but be filled with the Holy Spirit. We should sing songs together and give thanks to God all the time.

You mean I can be filled with the Holy Spirit instead of making foolish choices? I can be a wise person if I pay attention to the things I should be doing (living in community with God) instead of the things I shouldn't be doing (drinking too much)?

Maybe it's time for ME to wise up.

Maybe it's time for all of us to wise up.

To quote a Michael Jackson song from 30 years ago: "If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change." We are called to build the kingdom of God here on earth. We are called to change the way things are...to buck the status quo. And it seems the only way a change is going to happen is for us to make that change. And if we want to MAKE a change, then WE need to change.

Making snide remarks about someone with whom you disagree isn't going to change anything. Real change comes from within. And real change comes with wisdom. And wisdom is not shown by simply telling someone they are wrong. There is a big difference between intelligence and wisdom.

Intelligence is the ability to acquire knowledge and skills.

Wisdom is the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgment....and the soundness of action or decision using that experience, knowledge and good judgment.

So, what can we do to increase our wisdom?

Ms. Wisdom has invited us over for a dinner of bread and wine. In today's gospel Jesus does the same thing. Jesus offers himself to us. Because of his sacrifice - which we remember every week when we celebrate the Eucharist with bread and wine - we are given eternal life. And through this remembrance of his sacrifice, we come together and build community. We do this together to make us stronger; to make us wiser.

Paul tells the Ephesians to understand the will of the Lord. We understand the commandments Jesus gave us. We must love God and love our neighbors as ourselves. We must feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, tend the sick, welcome the stranger, visit the prisoner. Doing these things, we will build the kingdom of God here on earth. We will be wise in doing so. We will avoid being foolish during evil days.

We must do our best to accept the Holy Spirit and be filled with the Spirit as Paul suggests. We must praise and thank God at all times. These are ways to keep our minds off temporary things and build the kingdom of God.

So, wise up. Let's get it together and make sound decisions and right actions for the welfare and peace of the whole world.

Remember: Wisdom is soundness of action or decision using experience, knowledge and good judgment.

A final directive toward wisdom is not Biblical in origin, but I think Jesus would approve of the intent. The phrase is often erroneously attributed to Buddha. It is actually the title of a Victorian poem, by Mary Ann Pietzker, published in 1872, in a collection called "*Miscellaneous Poems.*"

Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?

There are many iterations and versions of this saying. When you are about to speak, it is often suggested you ask yourself these three questions before opening your mouth.

Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?

And not only when you speak, but when you act as well.

Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?

Is it true?

Truth is truth. One's opinion is not truth – it is an opinion. And there are no alternative facts. Something is true or it is false. Speaking and acting in truth requires us to look inside ourselves and to know the difference between what we BELIEVE and what are known facts.

Is it necessary?

The necessity of something MAY be in the eye of the beholder. Speaking and acting what is necessary requires us to look outside ourselves. We must have the wisdom to know our audience and think about how our statement or actions will be received. But I believe if we are filled with the Holy Spirit and have determined something is true, then we can determine if it is necessary.

Is it kind?

Kindness can hurt someone initially, but will help them in the future if you take action or speak with love.

As we work toward wisdom in our speech and in our actions, is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?

Let us pray:

Gracious God, you have blessed us with memory, reason, and skill. We pray that, with your help and guidance, we may also acquire wisdom. We want to build the kingdom of God here on earth – where everyone is treated with respect, dignity, and equality. Inspire us to truly live and walk in the way of insight. Help us to understand your will. Remind us to give you thanks at all times for everything. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Oh, .and God, we really want to wise up. Help us work on that.