



Greetings!

Wisdom has built her house; she has set up her seven pillars. She has prepared food, decanted her wine, and set her table. She has sent out her household staff to call from a spot overlooking the city. “Whoever wants enlightenment, step this way!” she says, inviting all who lack common sense. “Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have prepared for you. Abandon your foolishness that you may live and walk the path of understanding.” Proverbs 9:1-6, Inclusive Bible

In ancient literature Wisdom is often designated as a feminine persona. This is the case here in Proverbs chapter 9. Scholars point out some interesting imagery in the text: the decanting of wine, a house with seven pillars, the sending out of the household to call others to the table. Wisdom appears to be in search of “those who lack common sense” with an invitation that is so simple, it is hard to refuse. And yet, we know that wisdom is refused in this life and sometimes it is habitual.

Proverbs offers a lovely metaphor here for us to grasp. Lady Wisdom offers an invitation of bread and wine to reenter the cosmos, her home a Garden of Eden, if you will, “where creation’s goods are most intensely present and accessible.”¹

The proper path is to live in Wisdom’s House, but the rest of the chapter warns the reader of where so many live their lives. The end of the chapter offers another feminine figure – Folly. Wisdom’s House is in order, the fulfillment of all dreams of safety and security. Folly is the House of destruction and ultimately death.² Yet we find Lady Wisdom and her household calling everyone to leave the House of Disorder. They cry, *Come to the table prepared for you! A table prepared from the foundations of the world!*

Proverbs 9 is a story of the human condition and the divine drama of a creating God

who has offered perfection only to be turned away again and again. Each afternoon the call goes out to *Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have prepared for you. Abandon your foolishness that you may live and walk the path of understanding.*

This kind of divine invitation stands in stark contrast to so many of our human dinner engagements. The invitation in Proverbs is transformational. Human invitations are often transactional. Let me give you an example from my work.

I would say that most of our churches can identify the people in their community. Sometimes we are bold enough to invite people who are different than us, but not often. Far too often guests are invited to our House of Worship hoping they might preserve our church just the way we like it. Unlike us, Wisdom and her household go out in the community and invite others to come eat the bread and drink the wine which has been prepared for them.

You know Jesus throws those kinds of dinner parties, don't you? Think of all the times Jesus ate with others and he was criticized. Just google Jesus/eating/Bible and you will see the texts pop up! When you have an open invitation, you never know who is going to show up. And Jesus didn't always know who was going to show up. But Jesus didn't seem to care. In fact, it appears the more, the merrier! And this existed in the Hebrew tradition texts, too, found in a book like Proverbs and so many others. If this is how God acts and how Jesus the redeemer carried out his ministry, why do so many of us try to alter the guest list? God has been preparing the same meal from the beginning of time! Sometimes the ingredients are different, but the purpose and intent are clear and the mission is always the same... *Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have prepared for you.*

It's like this invitation from Isaiah:

All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, buy food to eat! Come, buy wine and milk, without money without price! Why spend your money on what is not bread, your wages for what fails to satisfy? Isaiah 55: 1-2, Inclusive Bible

Not so complicated, is it?

Some Questions to ponder:

- Do you accept open invitations?
- How do you decide whether or not you will accept the invitation?
- Have you said no to an invitation and what did it bring you?
- Which do you accept more often, transactional or transformational invitations?

¹ New Interpreter's Bible, Volume 5, Proverbs, Abingdon Press, 1997, pg. 103.

² Ibid, pg. 104.

Peace,



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