

**Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. <sup>2</sup>She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. <sup>3</sup>She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. <sup>4</sup>“Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment. <sup>5</sup>“Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. <sup>6</sup>Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.**

**<sup>13</sup> The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. <sup>14</sup>She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, <sup>15</sup>calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. <sup>16</sup>“Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment. <sup>17</sup>“Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!” <sup>18</sup> But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave. (NIV 84)**

Theme: What Invitation has your ear?

1. It all sounds great (vv. 3–5 and 14–17)
2. Look at what is behind it (vv. 1, 2 and 13, 17)
3. Think about the end result (vv. 6 and 18)

If you are like me you don't watch too many commercials any more—you fast-forward through them or you switch channels to your back-up show when the commercial break comes on. But you can't miss them all—inevitably you still have to sit through some of them. Some are good—some aren't. And then there are infomercials. What makes a commercial different than an infomercial? Generally speaking, commercials are from reputable companies trying to sell honest products; while infomercials try to sell one product from a company you never heard of that some guy invented in his garage. Although regular commercials have their fair share of crazy characters, one characteristic of infomercials is the pitchman. There is Vince Offer, the Shamwow Guy, Billy Mays from OxyClean and Orange Glow; or Anthony Sullivan of Nutrisystem fame who also hosted a show with Billy Mays called, *Pitchmen*. Why do infomercials get these over-the-top personalities to promote their products? Now, certainly there are some legit products sold from infomercials, but many times they get pitchmen to distract from the actual product—to entice you in by an

exciting presentation, when in reality the product isn't that good. Two different invitations—both trying to sell you something.

Today we see two different invitations—one from wisdom and one from folly. What invitation has your ear?

In our text for today wisdom is personified; King Solomon presents Wisdom as a person—here as a woman. The way Solomon presents wisdom in this book is nuanced to say the least. The theme of Proverbs is, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;” but wisdom here is not just a knowledge or skill; it also refers to moral judgment—doing the right things for the right reasons. Let it suffice it to say that by the context we can see Wisdom as Christ, and that wisdom is given to us through Christ in connection to the Word of Christ.

Folly too is personified in this chapter. In earlier chapters of Proverbs, Solomon warns against the adulterous woman who tries to entice people astray—this adulterous woman is now called folly and adultery is compared to straying away from God and his Word. So folly then is anything that the world throws at you trying to entice you to sin and away from God.

One of the most enjoyable experiences in life is to get invited over to someone's place for dinner. That is what we usually do when we get together—whether it's a dinner party, a family reunion, a wedding, a graduation party—or so on, we are often found eating and drinking with each other. Wisdom has prepared a meal for us—a great banquet. And she has invited us to dine with her. She sent out her maids into the city—to the highest point in the city so all can see and hear the invitation—come and dine with me. It reminds us of the parable of the banquet in which he sent his servants into the country to invite people to his banquet after his original guest list turned him down. This parable, of course, is about God's gift of eternal life and since the Jews rejected it, he gave his gospel to the Gentiles. It also reminds us of Christ's command to his disciples in Mark 16, **go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.**

And this invitation is given directly to us, **Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment.** Whether you want to admit it or not, you are the stupid and the simple—at least you were at one point in time. You were born ignorant of God and the way of salvation. You thought that you could contribute to your eternal life

in some way. And your view of morality wasn't based on God's Word, but on your own thoughts and attitudes which was influenced by the world around you. And yet you are called, and the first step in accepting wisdom's invitation is that you were part of the simple whom God graciously called.

But did you notice who also calls? Folly. **She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment.** Her invitation is **loud, undisciplined and without knowledge.** She sits by her house, trying to lure you in like the neon signs in the red-light district of a big city. She is trying to get you on the spur-of-the-moment. She doesn't announce her intentions, but tries to trick you into coming to dine with her.

You may have noticed that Folly gives the same invitation as wisdom. She doesn't lure you into her house by telling you up front that it's folly. No, she uses the same words in order to fool you, like the devil. He makes promises, "this will make your life happier and God wants you to be happy;" "God won't judge you for who you love;" "this is how God made you;" "it's fun and everyone has done it anyway." Similar to the promise he told Adam and Eve, **You won't surely die, but when you eat of it you will be like God, knowing good and evil.** And so like Adam and Eve we are often enticed into folly's house by the devil's folly.

So it is important to look at what is behind the invitation before we choose to accept or ignore it. Wisdom has built a house—a large and significant house. It reminds us of what Christ told the disciples on Maundy Thursday, **In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.** It also reminds us of God's family or household which Paul describes as, **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.**

Wisdom has also prepared a meal. And this isn't just some snacks to eat while watching a game; this isn't even a backyard barbeque. This is a great feast, a banquet filled with the finest of foods. Wisdom selected a choice animal and had it slaughtered and prepared; she mixed wine with spices to make it taste better. She brought out her

finest china. It promises to be a great banquet, an occasion that you won't soon forget.

What is this meal that wisdom invites us to? Wisdom's building of the house and the meal reminds us of his plan of salvation. Wisdom slaughtered the animal for the meal. This is the picture Isaiah uses to describe the death of Jesus who **was led like a lamb to the slaughter.** This banquet prepared by Wisdom also reminds us some other words from Isaiah, **On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.**

This banquet which Wisdom has prepared for us is the salvation God has prepared for all his people. This salvation he invites us to receive through faith in him worked in us by the Holy Spirit through the gospel. And remember who wisdom has invited to this salvation banquet—us, we are simple and stupid—the weak and sinful; and yet he has graciously called us to be saved through faith in Christ. Now look at what is behind folly's invitation. Notice what folly serves. **Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!** Not wine mixed with spices, not a choice animal; but stolen water and food. It may look fun, it may be enticing; but that's folly's trick. To take that money that isn't yours may be exciting, sex with that person may be fun, you certainly would have a lot more time on your hands if you didn't spend so much time here; you could really use that money instead of the Church; but that's folly's trick. Folly's invitation is to a supposedly better option; as if she knows better than God; it's fun and worry-free.

But it's not a well-thought-out plan. It's not a great, eloquent banquet, but a loud spur-of-the-moment event with empty promises. Like that first meal Satan served to Adam and Eve. That fruit may have looked pleasing to the Eve and perhaps it was nice and tasty; but the promises weren't what they seemed. And it ended in death.

And that is the result of dining with folly. Look at what Solomon says about those who go into folly's house to eat, **Little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave.** There is nothing good with sitting down and dining with folly. It may be exciting, it may have seemed fun at the time, and given some temporary pleasure. The food may have tasted sweet; but it was full of poison; and it ends in death.

And not just physical death; but eternal death. Those that listen to folly's call don't just end up with some piece of junk device that they'll only use once or twice. They end up in the dungeon God created to punish Satan. Those that eat with folly die will folly. But what about those who dine at wisdom's banquet? **Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.** That is God's gracious promise. Come to know the way of salvation! Learn to know your Savior and his blessed work for you! Then you will live! This living is not just continuing with a longer life on this earth; it is not even having a so-called "better life" on this earth. This is eternal life in heaven! The greatest gift of all awaits those who dine with God's wisdom, which is ours in Christ.

But he also gives us an earthly blessing: understanding. By nature we are stupid and slow; we don't know of God's love. But now that has been made known to us. God showed his love for us in sending his Son to die for us. The naive person is no longer naive. Sure, we may not know much in this life; but we have a firm hold on the greatest of all truths: The Lord has prepared our salvation for us which is ours through faith in Christ. What a wonderfully nourishing banquet wisdom has prepared for us!

Wisdom is like that reputed company selling a well-known and loved product. Folly is that infomercial with its pitchman. One offers what is good and leads to eternal life. The other may be exciting, but there is nothing behind the style and charisma; and it ends in eternal death. So what do we do? We leave our simple ways behind us. We turn to the way of understanding. We listen to wisdom's invitation—to eat and to drink the flesh and blood of Christ through faith. We get into his Word and cling to him all the days of our lives. We tune-into the Word; and we tune out the overtures of the world. As enticing as they may be, they lead to death. So we shut them out and focus on wisdom's call—a foretaste of the heavenly banquet that we'll enjoy forever in heaven. As John wrote in Revelation 19, **Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.** (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'"

Amen.