**Where will you dine?**

Text: Proverbs 9

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**Scriptures:** Proverbs 9; Revelation 19:6-9 {Occasion: Lord’s Supper}

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL] 34, 179, 377, (Lord’s supper: 378, 275, 32), 291, 530

**Series: Proverbs**. Sermon 12 (last in the series)

**Theme:** The banquets of wisdom and folly are compared, the wise dinner choosing wisdom’s instruction, the scoffer rejecting correction.

**Proposition:** Seek wisdom and dine with Christ

**Introduction**

When I was in Melbourne last year attending a preaching conference at the Reformed Theological College, I went out with some colleagues looking for a place to eat our evening meal. One of the brothers decided he’d like pizza or maybe pasta. So we walked to Lygon Street, which is home to a large concentration of [Italian restaurants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_cuisine). This area is often called the birthplace of Melbourne's "[cafe culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coffeehouse)". It is the cultural precinct of the [Italian community](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_community_of_Melbourne), sometimes referred to as "[Little Italy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Italy)". There we were in the early evening. There was not much foot traffic as yet on a street with upwards of 30 different Italian restaurants. We saw hawkers on the street trying to entice 3 ministers and a vicar on tight budgets to ‘eat up large’ in their establishment. ☺

Where would we dine? Which choice would we make?

Unlike Lygon Street in Melbourne, there are just two ‘eateries’ presented in Prov 9. That of Wisdom and of Folly. In this sermon, I’ve called the first ‘Lady Wisdom’s Banquet’ and the second “Mrs Folly’s Feed”.

Feasts and food feature prominently in the Bible. For example: in Isaiah 55:1 we read this invitation to "*Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price*”.

Jesus teaches the parable of the wedding feast as recorded in Matt 22 in which a King invites ‘as many as’ his servants can find to come to the wedding feast to be held for his son. As we celebrate Lord’s Supper today we look forward to the time when the marriage of the Lamb comes and the Bride of Christ, the church, is ready to live in perfect union with her Lord and Lover.

Our text today in Proverbs 9 points forward to this feast and leaves each one of us with the same question that my colleagues and I had in Melbourne, but with an eternal weight of significance: Where will you dine? Whose food will you eat?

Let’s begin with Lady Wisdom’s Banquet

1. **Lady Wisdom’s Banquet (v1-5)**

A banquet or feast is a meal where there is a lavish quantity of luxury food, generally served in multiple courses: starters, entrees, side dishes, main courses, desert with plenty of choices of beverages.

As we have already seen, wisdom is personified as a woman. I referred to ‘her’ as ‘Lady Wisdom’ last week. We meet her again here in chapter 9 and we can see that she, like the excellent wife in Prov 31:10-31, has been busy. Her diligent work is evident in three ways from our text: she has built her house; she has prepared a feast; she has issued an open invitation to come and dine. Let’s look at her labours in a little more detail:

**Firstly, she has built her house.** We don’t know much about the construction, apart from the seven pillars of this dwelling. The number seven is often symbolic in Scripture, indicating perfection. The seven pillars which she herself has hewn – cut out of the rock - may point to the completeness and perfection of her wisdom, which is the wisdom of God. Alternatively, or even also, the seven pillars may indicate the large size and solid construction of her spacious house.

Many of the old bank buildings in New Zealand were built with columns in front to convey the sense of a permanent, solid, reliable institution where your money would be safe. Similarly, Lady Wisdom’s house is no tin-shack which has been hastily erected and will not remain for long, hers is like a house built on rock which wind, floods and rain will not bring down. Hers is a house built on the foundation of the ‘fear of the LORD’ (v10). Her wisdom is grounded in a living relationship with God.

Hers is a suitable house for the many who will come to the feast which Lady Wisdom has prepared; there is ample accommodation for them all. In thinking of this dwelling, Christ’s words come to mind: **“***In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*” (John 14:2)

**Secondly**, **she has prepared a feast.** Lady Wisdom is no sluggard, not only does she engage in construction, but also the slaughtering of animals for the feast – an activity which was normally performed by men (cf. Gen 18:7; Judges 6:19; 1 Sam 25:11).

She has also mixed her wine for the lavish banquet which she has prepared. This probably means that she added something like honey and/or herbs to make the wine more spicy, potent and enjoyable (ref. Song 8:2; cf Ps 75:8-9). If you’ve ever had mulled wine, Lady Wisdom’s beverage may well have been like a cold version of this.

The point here is that she labours extensively to ensure that her hospitality is sumptuous and fitting for a great banquet. The food and drink which she offers give life (v6). Not only does her banquet look and taste good it is healthy and nutritious. It is true sustenance, not only for body for also for soul. Her provision is the ‘knowledge of the Holy One’ (v10b). To eat at her house is to know Christ, to know God (John 14:7).

**Thirdly, she has issued an open invitation.** Lady Wisdom is not alone in her work, she has young women who carry her invitation throughout the town. She wants everyone to hear that they are invited, so her envoys are sent to call out from the ‘highest places’ so that their invitation issues forth.Her open invitation is just like that of the king in the parable of the wedding feast in Matt 22. Jesus recounts how this king sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but when they did not come, he broadcast his call to come, saying to his servants: **‘***Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find*.’ (Matt 22:9)

Here’s the thing: God’s Wisdom is freely available, it’s not hidden or inaccessible. It’s as though Lady Wisdom says of her rich food and drink “*Here it is, come and get it!*”

Similarly, Christ Jesus, ‘*the power of God and the wisdom of God*’ (1 Cor 1:24b) is not hidden or inaccessible. He says, “*I am the bread of life*” (John 6:35). He gives ‘*living water*’ (John 4:10).

In contrast, Folly offers a very different dining experience.

1. **Mrs Folly’s Feed (v13-18)**

In 18th century England it was fashionable for the wealthy to have buildings constructed in their large landscaped estates. Roman temples, Egyptian pyramids, ruined abbeys, or Tatar tents were built for decoration, having little purpose and looking very out of place in an English country garden. These extravagant structures are called ‘follies’.

Folly is the complete opposite of wisdom. Folly can be defined as ‘a lack of good sense or normal prudence and foresight’. The Hebrew word (kesilah) translated ‘Folly’ in v13 literally means ‘stupidity’.

Here in Proverbs 9 folly is personified as a woman. We’ll call her ‘Mrs Folly’, although ‘Mrs Stupid’ would work too. Notice that in many ways, Mrs Folly imitates Lady Wisdom. She too is offering a meal, but her preparation is **very different** to that of Lady Wisdom

**Firstly, she has not built a house for the purpose of the meal.** She ‘sits at the door of her house’. Here the emphasis is on her laziness, her lack of effort. She also ‘takes a seat on the high places of the town’. Such a seat, chair or throne, indicated authority and honour (cf 16:12; 20:8,28; 25:5). Mrs Folly is an impostor, assuming the pose of a teacher or ruler, pretending to reign and wait for the gullible to bow to her authority.

**Secondly,** **she has not prepared the meal, she’s simply stolen the ingredients!** Hers is not haute cuisine – it’s literally “take away” food – water and bread which her thievery, not her diligence, have obtained. She seeks to persuade those who will listen that her food is superior – it has a special taste and delight. Listen to her sales pitch in v17: "*Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant*". She echoes the lie of Satan as he sought to persuade Eve: "*You will not surely die*” (Gen 3:4)

Mrs Folly says “*This meal is going to taste especially good and there will be no unpleasant after-effects!* “Have you ever eaten out and thought that you’d had a good meal, only to wake up the next day with tummy problems and the thought ‘wish I hadn’t eaten that!’ Mrs Folly’s fare is **not** what it seems. It’s actually toxic poison which will kill those who consume it. Like sin, it is accompanied by ‘fleeting pleasure’ (Heb 10:25) which quickly passes and then brings pain, sorrow and ultimately death.

**Thirdly, she issues her own invitation.** Her call is loud and seductive, like the adulteress of chapter 7. Notice that her invitation mimics that of Lady Wisdom word for word: **v16** "*Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!*". Mrs Folly is a liar! Offering something she does not have: wisdom. She promises satisfying food, but her meal is less than a light snack, it does no good those who consume it.

Mrs Folly’s has enticed many guests to dine at her ‘eatery’. They are now in the ‘depths of Sheol’ – the abode of the dead. Many people turn into Mrs Folly for a feed because they do not fear the Lord – they have no relationship with Him. They will not be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Which brings us to our 3rd point

1. **Christ’s Marriage Supper (ref. v7-12 & Rev 19:6-9)**

You’ve probably heard the phrase ‘use it or lose it’. It can be applied to keeping up a language which is not your 1st .Similarly, physical muscles which are not active will tend to waste away. The brain also needs to be used to stay ‘plastic’ and active. Albert Einstein “*Once you stop learning you start dying*”. Learning new skills and concepts is important to help prevent an aging mind from deteriorating rapidly.

However, no matter how old or young a person is there is something which always prevents learning. It is not a physical limitation, but an attitude of mind. Expressed this way in Prov 12:15 “*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes*”. Have you ever tried to teach anybody who thinks they know it all? Rather than growing in knowledge, understanding and wisdom, he or she keeps on being foolish. The fool is unteachable.

This ugly stupidity is expressed graphically in Prov 26:11 “*Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly*”. Educator Leo Buscaglia (1924-1998) once said “[*Those who think they know it all have no way of finding out they don't.*](https://www.azquotes.com/quote/347193?ref=know-it-all)*”* Author Piers Anthony wrote: “[*The biggest fool is the one who thinks he knows it all.*](https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1393787?ref=know-it-all)”

To learn well we need someone to guide us so that when we go off-track we are corrected. This is very much the role of a coach or a tutor. The scoffer is a fool who resists any form of correction – that is why he or she remains a fool. We see this in our text in v7-8a “*Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you*”. The word ‘correct’ here (yasar) is to discipline/chasten/admonish. The word ‘reprove’ (yacarh) has the parallel meaning to correct.

This is the way life works: those who resist correction remain in their foolish ways. Others who might be able to help tend to avoid the fool because of the ugly response they get when attempting to teach such a ‘know it all’. I’ve seen far too much of this kind of response in church life over the years.

How do you respond to correction, reproof, admonition, discipline? Our honest answer to this question can teach us much about whether we are more in the category of the fool or the wise person.

Look at the contrast here with the person who gladly receives correction: “*reprove a wise man, and he will love you*” (v8b). Why will a wise person be so glad to be corrected? Because he or she knows that the results will be worth it! v9 “*Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning*”.

One of the ‘strongest expressions of individualism in the Bible’ is in v12 and contains the same idea “*If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it*”. You will become the result of what you ‘eat’ whether that be wholesome food from Lady Wisdom’s Banquet, or damaging fare from Mrs Folly’s feed.

The day is coming when each one of us will stand **individually** before the judgement seat of Christ (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 20:12). On that day we will each give an account of the decisions we made in this life. In terms of our text we could say the choices we made about where to dine.

You and I could profitably ask ourselves these questions today: Did I have the humility to turn into Lady Wisdom’s house, knowing that I would eat and drink a wholesome meal there? Did I growin the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? (2 Pet 3:8) Did I gladly receive the discipline and correction of the Lord, knowing it to be both a sign of His love for me and to be a painful work for my good? (Heb 12:5-11). Or…

Did I decide to go for a quick feed at Mrs Folly’s place? Did I take the easy path to quick pleasure with long lasting pain? Did I resist correction because I thought I knew it all?

Whatever your answers to these questions today, you still have a choice. Where will you dine from this day forth? With Lady Wisdom where you will find Christ, ‘*the power of God and the wisdom of God*’ (1 Cor 1:24b)? Or with Mrs Folly, where you will eventually find death?

Today, as we celebrate and witness Lord’s Supper, we are reminded of Christ who is the bread of life. We remember his crucifixion where his blood was shed unto death. We are pointed to the Saviour who alone is the way, the truth and the life. The call of Christ comes to us in the words of Prov 9:5-6 "*Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight*."

As you dine at the table of the Lord today, remember that this supper points us forward to a banquet, the wedding supper of the Lamb in the New Heavens and New Earth. Let us make ourselves ready for that day as the Bride of Christ, gladly and wisely receiving instruction, teaching, discipline, correction and reproof so that we will increase in learning becoming ever more like our Saviour in His wisdom, truth and grace.

AMEN