

Sunday, August 18, 2024 – 13th Sunday after Pentecost

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Introduction

Wisdom prepares a feast, sets her table, and invites all to come and eat her bread and drink her wine. The first chapter of John's gospel owes much to the biblical tradition that imagined Wisdom as existing before anything was created and having a role in the work of creation. Christ, the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24), today invites us to eat his flesh and drink his blood. John's gospel includes no account of the institution of the Lord's supper, but here we can't help hearing Jesus' words as an invitation to the meal of bread and wine we share.

Prayer of the Day

Ever-loving God, your Son gives himself as living bread for the life of the world. Fill us with such a knowledge of his presence that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life to serve you continually, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14

¹⁰David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ¹²So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established.

^{3:3}Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. ⁴The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. ¹³I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. ¹⁴If you will walk in my ways, keeping

my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.”

Psalm 111

¹Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart,
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

²**Great are your works, O LORD,
pondered by all who delight in them.**

³Majesty and splendor mark your deeds,
and your righteousness endures forever.

⁴**You cause your wonders to be remembered;
you are gracious and full of compassion.**

⁵You give food to those who fear you,
remembering forever your covenant.

⁶**You have shown your people the power of your works
in giving them the lands of the nations.**

⁷The works of your hands are faithfulness and justice;
all of your precepts are sure.

⁸**They stand fast forever and ever,
because they are done in truth and equity.**

⁹You sent redemption to your people and commanded your covenant forever;
holy and awesome ¹ is your name.

¹⁰**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all who practice this have a good understanding. God’s praise endures forever.**

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:15-20

¹⁵Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, ²⁰giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: John 6:51-58

[Jesus said,] ⁵¹“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

⁵²The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” ⁵³So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; ⁵⁵for my flesh is true food and my blood is

true drink. ⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

Prayers and introductions from
SundaysAndSeasons.com

Prayers of Intercession

Calling on the spirit of Wisdom to guide our hearts and our minds, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Wisdom has built her house. May the church be a house of wisdom for all who enter. May we continue to grow and stretch in ways we never thought possible. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Wisdom has mixed her wine. May the harvest seasons be plentiful this year. We pray for orchards, vineyards, farms, and all of creation. Protect and conserve the earth. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Wisdom has employed her laborers. Be with all who seek adequate employment. Guide our economic and governmental leaders to support the people of our world with fair wages and safe working conditions. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Wisdom has invited her guests. Make your presence known to all who feel lost, abandoned, or hurting at this time. Direct your spirit of care to all who seek healing and comfort. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Wisdom has set her table. May this congregation be a welcome table to all who seek the refuge of God. Break down walls and barriers that prevent us from offering a seat at this table to anyone who comes. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Wisdom has shown her path of insight. May we journey on her paths, looking toward a bright future while remembering from where we have come. We give our thanks for those who have gone before us. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We lift up these prayers to you, gracious God. Receive them into your holy keeping.

Amen.

A reflection for this 13th Sunday after Pentecost

You're Invited

Today Jesus invites us to a meal. It is an extraordinary invitation to do an ordinary thing: form bonds of love and community through shared food and drink. Like Wisdom inviting us to the feast of insight (Prov. 9:1-6), Jesus' invitation to share in the meal of his body and blood teaches us about the breadth and depth of God's love and about God's desire for us to abide in that love (John 6:56).

Jesus' audience asks a reasonable question: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John 6:52). Jesus' answer doesn't really address the question; instead, he reiterates that he is the true bread from heaven, the true source of eternal life. This must have been off-putting to his listeners. Eat flesh? Drink blood? And yet, here we find a profoundly grace-filled invitation—abide in me—and a promise: through this meal I abide in you. We are invited to not only join Jesus at the table, but to be at home in the love of God, knowing that Christ makes his home in our hearts and lives too. So come: eat, and get to know God.



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