

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

Introduction to the day

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

Let us pray.

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

A reading from 1 Kings.

Solomon, son of David and Bathsheba, becomes king over Israel when his father dies. He asks God for wisdom in order to govern the people. God grants his request, and Solomon becomes known far and wide for his great wisdom.

PSALM: Psalm 111

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. (Ps. 111:10)

SECOND READING: Ephesians 5:15-20

A reading from Ephesians.

True wisdom integrates our new reality in Christ with our Christian fellowship and daily conduct. Because we are filled with the Spirit, Christians regularly rejoice together, give thanks to God for one another, and care for one another. In this way we revere our Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL: John 6:51-58

In John's gospel, the feeding of the five thousand leads to extended teaching in which Jesus identifies himself as the true "bread of life." Finally, in these verses, he makes a connection that would not be understood until after his death, in light of the church's celebration of holy communion.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

You Are What You Eat

"You are what you eat." This phrase is frequently used in American culture to encourage young children to eat nutritious food and, yes, is often met with exasperated sighs on the part of such children. Despite the phrase having become cliché, a surprising amount of scientific truth accompanies it.

When we consume food, it travels through the esophagus and into the stomach and small intestine, where it combines with fluids and breaks down into nutrients. These usable nutrients pass into our bloodstream and to the rest of our body. Thus, the process of eating and drinking literally turns your food into part of your body. So truly, "You are what you eat."

This week's gospel continues Jesus' long teaching that he is the true bread from heaven: "Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty," we heard last week (John 6:35). Today he gets more graphic: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life"—no wonder those gathered around him get upset! The Gospel of John doesn't include the institution of the Lord's supper; indeed, in John, Jesus himself is the Passover lamb, slain at the cross. But here, thirteen chapters earlier, Jesus declares that accepting the invitation to come to and believe in him—to "eat [his] flesh and drink [his] blood"—means *life*. When we take into ourselves Jesus' words, his healing touch, the power of his love, they become part of us. They nourish our spirits so we can *live* in wholeness, health, and salvation (words that are all connected in the ancient languages of scripture).

It is not surprising, then, that holy communion, the sharing of literal food and drink, became a profound means by which the church receives—and becomes—the body of Christ. In a mysterious way we can't fully understand, we truly are what we eat, and no other meal is more life-giving.

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.

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. We especially pray for Sandra Gagnon, Karen Weigold, Keith Weckwerth, Shirley Glickman, Marilyn Schneider, Denita Wolfgram, Stephanie Yourth, Christopher Yourth, Linda Boland, Glenda Panke, Debbie Thom, Donna L Hoffman, Walter Hobden, Harold Yourth, Doug Sell, Danny Schultz, Bill Lorbetskie and those in long term care facilities and senior residences.

In this moment of silence, we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. (pause) 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.

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✝ give you peace.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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