

## Bread from the Old Testament: Wisdom

Proverbs 9:1-6

August 18, 2024

First Presbyterian, Luling

Ponder these two invitations, and see if you hear any difference in them. I say to a friend, "Come over Tuesday and eat supper with us." Or I say to someone else, "Come over for supper on Tuesday." Again, the first statement is, "Come over Tuesday and eat supper with us." And the second statement is "Come over for supper on Tuesday." Maybe it's just me, but there's a difference. I mean something different, and I'll act differently, depending on what kind of invitation I've made.

"Come over Tuesday and eat supper with us" means that I am very comfortable with this person. I'm inviting them over to our house that will not be especially clean. I will be barefoot and wearing my stained apron. I am probably still in the midst of cooking supper, and it will be something that we eat on any normal day, nothing special. I will have neglected to ask this guest what they like to drink, so they'll be given the choice of water, milk, iced tea, or diet coke. Dessert will be whatever we have on hand, probably some cookies someone made three days ago. It is, quite simply, an invitation to join us in what we would have already been doing on Tuesday night at suppertime.

"Come over for supper on Tuesday," though, is a whole different thing. Supper is the event. They are the invited guest. We will clean the whole house, at least downstairs. Children will be instructed to remember that they have previously been instructed in table manners. Supper will be almost ready when this guest arrives, and it will have involved some special planning or preparation. Maybe homemade bread, a freshly baked dessert that requires a fork to eat, a serving bowl rather than the pot I cooked it in. Drinks will be chilled. I will still have forgotten to take off my apron, but I will have intended to do so and will apologize for it. All in all, this is a much more special event than the other dinner. This is an invitation to something special. Some people are gifted at making this second sort of meal seem effortless and fun, but I am not. Some people can pull off this sort of meal on a regular basis. Not I.

This second sort of meal is more of a party, a celebration, a feast. It's an occasion, not just Tuesday night supper. It involves more intention and preparation, and, we all know this is coming, more cleanup afterwards. It's an event, though. A happening. An occasion.

Woman Wisdom is inviting people to this second sort of feast. A “come over for supper” meal, an occasion. Woman Wisdom appears throughout the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a very loose collection of sayings, but female imagery opens and closes the book. Woman Wisdom has been the subject of a whole lot of discussion and speculation. She’s a personification of Wisdom, and what people are interested in talking about is what relationship does Wisdom have to God and to Jesus. Which is an interesting thing to ponder, but not really what I’m pondering today.

What I am pondering today is where does Woman Wisdom’s feast fit in with the bread in the Old Testament that we’ve been talking about, where does this meal fit in with the meal that Elisha fed the prophets in the midst of famine, with the manna that God provided to the Israelites, with the provision that the angel gave to Elijah in the wilderness. Our God is a God who provides what we need, who can call abundance out of the midst of scarcity, who prepares us for what is to come.

And God, in God’s wisdom, sets a feast of wisdom before us. This woman, our hostess, has made some intentional preparations. She’s built the house, prepared the meat, made the wine, set the table. All of that is a whole lot more work than I’ve ever put in to any meal I’ve ever made, or probably into all the meals I’ve ever made added up together. She sends out her servants to invite people, and then she herself makes a general announcement: come over for supper. It’s not a come eat supper with us. It’s a come over for supper. It’s an event with a purpose.

She’s not particular about who she invites. Much like the king in a parable that Jesus will tell, she invites not the upper crust of her society, but those who are simple, those without any sense. She’s inviting them to feast on wisdom, to feast on what she herself personifies, who she is.

It’s possible that Jesus is echoing that idea, when he invites the disciples to feast on himself, the bread of life.

The purpose of Woman Wisdom’s feast is threefold. Her simple guests will lay aside their immaturity. They will live. And they will walk in the way of insight, or understanding. When the guests partake in the feast of wisdom and Woman Wisdom’s table, they will change their lives so much that they will truly live, in a way they have not experienced before. They will understand in ways they haven’t, and they will live.

The purpose of Jesus’s feast is similar, but extended beyond what Woman Wisdom offers. “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats

of this bread will live forever,” and “Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.” Jesus as host is offering himself as the feast, and the purpose of his feast is eternal life, life beyond what the disciples have understood, yes, but also life beyond anything the disciples have imagined.

Woman Wisdom’s invitation, Jesus’s invitation, are still open for us. They’re inviting us to feast on wisdom, to feast on grace and mercy. They’re inviting us to live in ways we haven’t figured out how to live yet, in ways we have not been able to imagine. They’re inviting us to walk in their ways, to live now and forever.

These meals that we’re invited to are events, occasions, celebrations. There are preparations and special foods and purposes for these meals. They are “come over for supper” occasions. But they are also “come have supper with us” meals. Our hosts are inviting us to come as we are. We don’t have to look a certain way or act a certain way or make a big deal. We may have to help set the table, and we may notice some other guests aren’t quite what we expected. But we are home, welcomed into a family, sharing a meal together.

Come over for supper. Come have supper with us. Woman Wisdom is inviting us to set aside immaturity, walk in the way of insight, and live. Jesus is inviting us to live abundantly and eternally. Come.