

Worship at Home
July 24, 2022



God calls us to worship:

Responsive reading: Psalm 1

Hymn: #650 “He leadeth me”

We offer our prayers:

Prayer of Praise and Supplication (*please remain standing*):

Ever present God,
 We seek and you offer.
 We ask and you give.
 We knock and you open the door.
Ever gracious and triune God,
 you hear the requests of your children
 and in your goodness, you answer.
 You offer the gifts of new life and hope
 to all who seek your blessing.
 You pray within us,
 even when we cannot find words ourselves.
Receive our praise and our prayers this day, O God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit –
ever one and ever three;
draw us into your holy presence,
so that your love will transform us
to serve you in the world you love.

Please be seated.

*If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves,*

and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

*Yet we know that nothing is able to separate us
from the love of God in Jesus Christ.*

*Let us, therefore, be free to confess our sins
before the God who is faithful and just. (1 John 1:9)*

Prayer of Confession (Unison):

God of mercy;

**As we gather to celebrate your gift of love
we recall the times when we forget you
and are divided one from the other.**

**How often our thoughts, our words, and our actions
have betrayed the goodness you have shown to us.**

Forgive us.

Mend what is broken.

Heal the wounded relationships

that separate us from you,

from one another,

**and which leave us divided within ourselves;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

God offers the assurance of grace: John 3:16

We offer our lives and resources:

Offering plates are positioned as you enter and leave the sanctuary. If you'd prefer to use e-transfers, please speak with Rev. Ian, Judy Armstrong (St. Andrew's), or Howard McKellar (Knox)

God speaks to us:

Hymn:

#498 "Sing them over again to me"

Two houses

According to the church calendar, the season that began on Pentecost Sunday and lasts until the start of Advent is called “Ordinary Time,” or, “Pentecost Season.” During this long season we are invited to reflect on the implications of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost, and the Ascension in our daily living as disciples of Jesus.

One of those implications is that those of us who confess Jesus as Lord and Messiah are baptized in the name of the Triune God, live now in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Along with working of miracles, speaking in tongues, and interpreting tongues, the gifts the Spirit gives to us include understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, fear of the Lord, and wisdom.

Living in the power of the Holy Spirit, therefore, involves pursuing, learning, remembering, and heeding Godly wisdom. Indeed, the personification of wisdom presented in the book of Proverbs as Lady Wisdom, is a way of visualizing the Holy Spirit who speaks through scripture and ministers to our heart, mind, and through our actions.

Spiritual living involves the pursuit of Godly wisdom.

Through the first 9 chapters of the book, we’ve listened in as a father encouraged his son to make the pursuit of Godly wisdom his life’s goal.

The insert in your bulletin (which is provided as a PDF file on the “sermons” page of our website under the video for today) summarizes the some of the core beliefs which I’ve been arguing are necessary and helpful to join the son in this request and engage the wisdom of the Proverbs in our Christian, Spirit-led living.

Today, in this penultimate sermon in the series, we’ll hear the last chapter in the book’s introduction. In chapter 9 the father, having built his case, presents the son with a choice.

READ: PROVERBS 9:1-6, 13-18.

To set up the choice, we’re presented with two scenarios:

(a) Lady Wisdom has built her house, slaughtered her animals and prepared a feast. She has sent out her servant-girls to seek out and invite in anyone who'll respond to her call.

Lady Wisdom is active – *built, hewn, slaughtered, set, sent out*, diligent, and caring. She searches us out and pleads with us to join her for our good – so that we would mature as God's image-bearers and live His good life in communion with the One in whose presence is peace beyond understanding.

(b) Woman Folly, in contrast, *sits* at her door. She calls out to those walking past – not seeking us out, but simply waiting for us to walk by. She entices the unsuspecting to come to her and partake of her illicit food and drink.

We're presented with two houses in which to live, learn, laugh, and love.

The choice is ours to make.

Whose food will you share?

In whose house will you dwell?

Who will you pursue?

A noteworthy detail is that Lady Wisdom has *hewn seven pillars*.

We can picture that in our mind's eye. Seven pillars supporting the roof of the porch surrounding the house.

Some have distilled the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the seven that are on the bulletin cover and which I listed above. They then equate the seven pillars of Lady Wisdom's house to these seven gifts of the Spirit. I don't discredit that; however, I think it is too limiting of the Holy Spirit's ministry. The Spirit gives more than 7 gifts.

I think we ought to interpret this detail in light of the symbolic significance of the number seven.

In the biblical imagination, seven is symbolic of perfection and completion. On the 7th day God rested – not because he was tired, but because his masterpiece was finished. There is nothing more to be done.

As we, year after year, celebrate the high holy days of the Christian year, we celebrate God's completeness.

Jesus was born. He has died and been resurrected. Sin is forgiven. The means of reconciling with our heavenly Father are in place. The Holy Spirit abides within those who believe and are baptized. God's Word has been recorded and preserved for our good and His glory.

There are no more arguments to make.

All that needs to be said has already been said.

The house is in order; built with seven pillars.

The feast is prepared.

The invitation extended.

The choice is now yours to make.

If you want to know God, to dwell in the house of the Lord forever, to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, to follow Jesus and be his hands and feet, to enjoy communion with the Son of God and Messiah Jesus, then pursue Godly wisdom.

Make the proverbs contained in chapters 10-22 part of your regular meditation and study. Sit in prayer with the Proverbs and trust the Spirit to guide your eyes to the proverb the Lord needs you to hear today. Learn it. Listen to it. Remember it. Obey it in the busiest times of your day as well as in the moments of quiet.

There's no more to be said.

The choice is yours.

For the good of your soul, the health of our societies, and the glory of God.

Amen.

We respond with prayers of thanksgiving and intercession:

Lord God, Loving God,
We come before you in prayer,
trusting that your power works in the world in ways we cannot imagine.
We thank you for calling goodness forward,
for supporting love and creating justice
even in situations which seem hopeless to us.
Draw on our prayers this day as signs of your Spirit at work in our lives:

God of the world and all its peoples,
we pray today for those who lift up their voices in troubled nations...
in Ukraine, Syria, Palestine, Ethiopia and Tigray, Myanmar
(add other places in the recent news)

Call the powerful to account, O God,
and inspire leaders with the courage
to listen to voices that cry out in pain and desperation.

God of our everyday lives,
we pray today for all those whose everyday lives have been disrupted
by forces beyond their control:

those struggling with the effects of Covid 19 and other illnesses
those burdened by the rising costs of daily needs
those facing effects of climate change on their communities
(add any other disruptions in the news this week)

Inspire governments to combine compassion and good planning to respond to
those who face such upheaval.

God of the courageous and compassionate,
we pray for those who live out their commitment to the well-being of others day by
day, in health care, education, social work, public service and environmental
concern.

Support them in times of stress
and inspire them to speak out when they see needs being neglected

God of our homes and families,
we pray for our friends and neighbours near and far,
for all who travel and for those who find themselves strangers in new communities.
Draw near to each one in deep need, especially those on our hearts this day.

Keep silence for 15 seconds.

Equip us to support those lives that intertwine with ours,
for we are your people, embraced by your love, which we claim together in the
words Jesus' taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with God's blessing:

Hymn:

#569 "O Jesus, I have promised"

Blessing:

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.