



August 17-18-19, 2024 – 13th Sunday after Pentecost

Preacher: Pastor Scott Oelhafen

Sermon Theme: "You Don't Need to Be a Rocket Scientist"

1. To Appreciate God's Wisdom 2. To Take Part in God's Wisdom

Sermon Text: Proverbs 9: 1-6

1 Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. 2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. 3 She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. 4 "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment. 5 "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. 6 Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.

Dear Christian friends,

You've seen them in explosive action on the evening news. They're called: "Smart bombs." Launched by plane or warship, these missiles certainly pack a punch. Computerized guidance systems direct the deadly payload hundreds of miles away with laser-like accuracy to strike their targets within just a few feet. Smart bombs indeed.

I'm sure you have a Smart Phone in your pocket or purse right now. Studies say 95% of all cell phone sold now are smart phones. They certainly are NOT like your grandpa's flip phones. Smart phones have the ability to not only talk or text. They act like a mobile computer to check the weather with amazing accuracy, find the cheapest gas in town, or even play Minecraft or Monopoly on the run. Smart phones indeed.

With such scientific advances like smart bombs and phones, we wonder out-loud if there is any place in this brave new world for something as old-fashioned as: smart people. "Duh" a wise man might say. Conventional wisdom says that smart bombs and phones are only as smart as those who design them and use them.

Of course we know there are different levels of smart among smart people. There are "skill-smart" – those who do skilled jobs effectively and efficiently. There are those who are technology-smart, designing the complicated guidance system of a smart bomb or the ingenuity of a smart phone. But, far more important are those who "live smart."

That's the kind of smart, King Solomon, the wisest man in human history and the author of the book of Proverbs, urges you and me to be. He urges us to live smart each day using the practical wisdom God gives us in His Holy Word. And keep this in mind: one can be skill-smart and technology-smart and at the same time live foolishly. Or to repeat the phrase from the book of Proverbs, "live simple." It all comes down to this: to make it in this world that God rules, guides, and saves, **You Don't Have to Be a Rocket Scientist.** No, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to appreciate God's wisdom. And you don't have to be a rocket scientist to take part in God's Wisdom.

I think you know New Ulm is the place to be for festivals. Take your pick: Bavarian Blast, Brown County Free Fair, Herman-Fest, and much more. It's always a party. But, the party or fest you REALLY don't want to miss is the wisdom-fest God Himself has prepared for us in His Holy Word. Only there do we find full and free forgiveness for our past, a meaningful life of peace and purpose right now, and a future eternity in heaven guaranteed to every Christian believer.

King Solomon, a direct ancestor of Christ, reveals God's wisdom in a very special way. Literally, He brings wisdom to life in Proverbs, chapter 9 by making wisdom a woman. It's a literary tool called personification: giving human attributes to an inanimate thing. Smart man, don't you think, making wisdom a woman? King Solomon compares and contrasts God's wisdom with this world's foolishness, by introducing us to this lady. And if we spend time with her, we get quite an education. To better appreciate God's wisdom, listen to how Solomon describes her in the opening words of our sermon: **1 Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars.** In other words, God's wisdom is big. It takes more than a small mind to understand it. Solomon further explains: **2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.** King Solomon now compares God's wisdom to a gourmet dinner of the highest quality with one-of-a-kind ingredients. God's wisdom is something special. And what's really amazing is that God wants others to have a seat at His table. So the invitation goes out: **3 She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city.** Sounds like this heavenly banquet is important and worth it. And spiritually speaking, there's nothing better than heaven. So who's first on the guest list? **4 "Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment.** It might come as a shock to the elite of our world, but God invites the simple, the naïve, the easily-fooled. Translation? God invites you and me to enjoy His wisdom fest.. **5 "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.** What's so great about the menu? More important than food for the body, it's food for our eternal souls that we can't live without. **6 Leave your simple ways and you will live.** Honestly, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to appreciate God's wisdom-fest.

That's because God's wisdom, begins and ends with Jesus Christ and His Gospel message. Putting Jesus and His saving message first in our hearts and lives is what true wisdom is all about. For Jesus declared later in the New Testament: **I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will never be hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty (John 6:35).** Bottom line, when we believe the words Jesus tells us in the Holy Bible, we live forever. We're rescued from the simple way of thinking that heaven has to be earned or deserved or on the opposite side of the spectrum -- minimized or ignored.

If only we listened more to this Gospel invitation. Life would be so much better. Come to think about it, Adam and Eve didn't listen to God. They thought they knew better. How foolish. How sad. They exchanged God's wisdom for human foolishness and plunged our world into sin, death, and hell. And more times we care to count, we've done the same. We've foolishly filled up on the junk food of the simple life: "if it feels

good, do it. Do to others before they can do it to you. I know better.” Sound familiar? We’ve gorged ourselves on holding on to the things of this world rather than valuing heaven more. That’s what the book of Proverbs describes: “the simple life”. Our guilty consciences have taken wrong turns after wrong turns and we deserve nothing more than to be abandoned by God, suffering for our ignorance and our insolence forever.

But, our wise and kind Heavenly Father God has NOT abandoned us. In love, He shares His sacred secrets with us in His Holy Word. When we look at life the way God does, we see more than just the here and now. We see into eternity. We see that God was already thinking about us before the creation of the world, planning our salvation. At just the right time, God sent His Son Jesus to die in our place to make us right with God and earn heaven for every sinner. Foolishness, the world says. Why does it matter if a Jewish man died 2000 years ago and rose from the grave – why does it matter? It’s simple. God says so. It’s what makes the difference between hell and heaven, between death and life. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to appreciate God’s Wisdom.

Nor do you need to be a rocket scientist to take part in it. Really, it’s simple. To use a smart bomb, you need to be military. To use a smart phone, you need to be plugged into a phone plan. And to live smart, just follow God’s word in your life. Whether you’ve studied God’s Word all your days, or you are new to this, the key is to keep learning and not give up. A hundred years ago, a young man was hired by a lumber company to cut trees. He was given a quota he needed to reach each week. The first week, he exceeded the quota by 20 trees. The second week, he exceeded it by 10 trees. The third week, he barely made the quota even though he was working just as hard and just as many hours. The fourth week, he fell behind and was fired. I bet you know why. He failed to sharpen his ax. In a similar way, spiritual wisdom needs honing and sharpening. And how else is that honing and sharpening going to happen except through ongoing Bible study and worship of the true God. Without ongoing contact with God’s Word, we are lost. When we think of Christian education here at St. Paul’s, we naturally think of our own St. Paul’s Lutheran School that’s starting in just a few days. We also think about our Sunday School and Wednesday School that starts the first week of September. Pray for our teachers and students and encourage our families to make use of these programs. For adults, we have a full menu of Sunday morning Bible classes, Pastor Smith’s Bible classes and Connect Groups that are launching at the end of September. They are all designed to help us better understand God’s Word and apply it to our lives. You know that continuing education at your job or school is important. Spiritual education is even more important. Spiritual growth is essential and ongoing. But, the ultimate goal of Bible study is not just to learn dusty old history, to be able to recite the books of the Bible in order, to memorize the longest Psalm, or to name all the kings of Israel. The ultimate goal is heaven. And when we take part in God’s Wisdom, we even get a little taste of heaven right now.

So be impressed by the red glare of smart bombs – and use your smart phone to make life a little easier. Don’t forget to make use of God’s Wisdom first. Spiritual wisdom has nothing to do with whether our ACT scores are over 25 or our IQ is more than 100,

Spiritual wisdom has everything to do with your relationship with God. So, keep your spiritual ax sharpened, plug into the Bible and keep learning. It will make you wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. So until next week, class dismissed. Amen.