

Collect

O God, you declare your almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity: mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace, that we, running the way of your commandments, may receive your gracious promises, and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Post Communion

Lord of all mercy, we your faithful people have celebrated that one true sacrifice which takes away our sins and brings pardon and peace: by our communion keep us firm on the foundation of the gospel and preserve us from all sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Psalm 34.9-14

- 9 Fear the Lord, all you his holy ones, •
for those who fear him lack nothing.
- 10 Lions may lack and suffer hunger, •
but those who seek the Lord
lack nothing that is good.
- 11 Come, my children, and listen to me; •
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.
- 12 Who is there who delights in life •
and longs for days to enjoy good things?
- 13 Keep your tongue from evil •
and your lips from lying words.
- 14 Turn from evil and do good; •
seek peace and pursue it.

Ephesians 5.15-20

15 Be 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.

[John 6.51-58](#)

⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

52 The 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 for ever.'

Sermon

What's the most foolish thing you can think of? X2

When my daughters Grace and Evelyn now 16 and 14 were much younger, I was on a car journey and I fancied a coffee. Knowing how much they liked hot chocolate I said they too could have a hot drink to take with them back to the car provided they promised not to spill it!

I think we drove one hundred yards before the car was showered with steaming hot brown liquid. Whose fault was it? What was in my mind, had I learnt nothing about young children. The fault was mine not theirs, it was inevitable going to happen yet for a fleeting moment I thought, this stupid idea is a really good one! I'd weighed up the chances of them spilling the drink knowing it to be a possibility and had relied on their well-intentioned promise to stop the drink from being tossed everywhere.

Do you ever have that feeling that you've doing something that's foolish yet somehow you convince yourself that it will be alright? Last weekend at the balloon fest, having a picnic with friends, one of our number told herself it would be fine to hold an apple in her hand and to continue cutting it with a serrated knife. When she did in fact slice her finger thank God there were St John's Ambulance First Aiders at the event to bandage up the wound.

I wonder what daft things you can recall doing?

Wisdom seems like a lifetime's work and time seems to provide an opportunity to teach us about the nature of life. Provided that is that we pay attention we'll learn more and more how to make a success of things and make good decisions.

Grey hair is a sign of wisdom according to the bible and wisdom teeth come last and should signify a certain stage of maturity and wisdom. I've had all but one of my wisdom

teeth removed, I'm not sure how to interpret that! I'll let you decide.

Can you think of an example of a wise decision you or someone has made ...talk to your neighbour for a moment....

The writers of Wisdom Literature, into which the book of Proverbs falls, were concerned to learn lessons from other civilisations as they formed a nation of Israel.

How do you run a country unless you devise some ways and means of doing do? In an oral tradition where only the scholars could read and write, it was vital to devise ways to memorise scriptures and so we find the reading written in a poetic form with repetition that people could learn and memorise.

Unlike the Greek philosophers, who were interested in clever speeches for their own sake, the writers of Proverbs wanted people to be wise to improve their decision making and the ordering of their society.

The original meaning in Hebrew for ‘wisdom’ was more to do with learning a practical skill like dress making or gardening.

Think for a moment about a practical skill that you have and how you have become better at it over the years? What does it require to develop a skill?

Perhaps you were taught by someone, perhaps you practised hard, you had to be prepared to make mistakes. One thing is certain - without perseverance you won’t develop or get very far. Isn’t it also true that unless you remain open to new ideas and being taught new techniques, you might well stay at the same level of skill or worse, become out-of-date with recent changes?

This is true both of building a community and building a life. Therefore the authors wanted to instruct people in how to make a success of their lives and of their communities. It would require perseverance, practise, being prepared to make mistakes, having another go.

What then is it then that makes us wise?
Certainly paying attention to life's
experiences and how decision have panned
out.

Now,if you read on to verse ten of Proverbs
Nine, it is the fear of the LORD that is the
beginning of wisdom. This doesn't mean we
live lives terrified of God but it is more to do
with having a healthy respect for who it is
that authors and perfects life itself.

In our gospel readings from John over the
last few weeks we have heard Jesus
describing himself as the bread of life.

Last week it was emphasising that Jesus
provides us with eternal life if we feed on
him. This week it is more referring to living
bread :

*52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this
man give us his flesh to eat?' 53 So 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.*

60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' 61But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? 62Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

Jesus offers us his flesh to, literally chew on. Ouch! No wonder the early Christians were thought to be cannibals. Both the disciples and the other Jews found this a difficult, offensive claim, coming as it did from the local lad from downtown Nazareth - what did he know, who did he think he was? This was blasphemous, claiming to be bread from heaven.

The reference to bread and wine both in Proverbs and John is not the same point being made as giving up his body at the cross, nor is it about communion. Here it is the fact that Jesus IS the Old Testament.

Have you thought about that St John's gospel tells us that The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. There was only the Old

Testament in Jesus' day, so Jesus became everything that was described and prophesied about the nature of God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob.

Last week we learnt that Elijah wanted to die and was tired from his calling to be a prophet of the living God. The angel said No, get up and eat, twice in fact, for otherwise the journey will be too much for you. Instead you need to be strengthened.

Today Lady Wisdom invites you to a feast, Proverbs invites you to memorise lessons for good living. Today, Jesus invites you to feast on his flesh and blood. What will result? You will have a spirit-filled life that will transform your life, give you the real life that everyone is searching for, an exciting vibrant dynamic hope-filled, joy-infused, daring courageous energetic life. Jesus offers us real living if only we spend time in His presence and on his words. You might not be in the best of health in body but your mind and your spirit, these will flourish and thrive as they feast on God's wisdom.

How are you feasting on Jesus? A banquet for one isn't any fun, makes me think of a bargain bucket from KFC.

The Word of God his Bible is the menu not the meal, we are to move and live and breathe and have our being as a spirit-filled body of people.

Do you want wisdom, do you want to make better choices in life, do you want this community this church this society to make better choices? It starts with us. We are called by Jesus to feast on his flesh.

Every Thursday and Sunday evening I invite you to feast with me on the Word of God to talk over the passages from the sermon, to wrestle with difficult texts, to work at and chew on and make mistake and practise and learn from one another. The bible is a dialogue and all of us has a valid contribution to make to the conversation.

To develop the practical skill of applying God's word to our lives, we need to stay in

training. When will you join us? Why don't you join us? Why won't you join us?

Jesus promises to raise you up on the last. Here also what Proverbs Nine promises

*7 Whoever corrects a scoffer wins abuse;
whoever rebukes the wicked gets hurt.*

*8 A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate you;
the wise, when rebuked, will love you.*

9 Give instruction to the wise, and they will become
wiser still;*

teach the righteous and they will gain in learning.

*10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*

*11 For by me your days will be multiplied,
and years will be added to your life.*

Christ Jesus, has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Let us never give up feasting on the flesh of Jesus.