**Waiting Room Series**

**“The Ultimate Choice”**

**Introduction:**

Last week I began a new series on the topic of “waiting.” The Bible is full of admonitions to “wait for the Lord.” Passages like:

*Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!* (Ps.27.14)

*Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!* (Ps.31.24)

*Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield.* (Ps.33.20)

“Waiting” is one of the most challenging exhortations of Scripture. Waiting for a job. Waiting for a spouse. Waiting for a healing. Waiting for a spiritual awakening in a son or daughter. Waiting for emotional health. Life is full of waiting. In many ways life is one big waiting room. Just think about how much time we wait in line at the grocery store, getting coffee, or sitting in traffic! Sorry, I brought up waiting in traffic in church on the Lord’s Day. That’s probably a sin in somebodies book.

What about waiting on hold to talk to a Customer Service Agent? They all know we hate to wait so they make excuses like, “Due to the high volume of calls your wait time might make be longer than you expected but please know they your call is important to us.” When I hear that statement I think, “What is wrong with your products that there would be a high volume of calls?” Then after listen to a few minutes of elevator music they say, “Your wait time is 35 minutes. Please press #1 if you would like a call back – you will not lose your place in line.” Ok, that sounds good. Only to discover 45 minutes later my phone was on silent and missed the call back!

Researchers have discovered that we spend 1-2 years of our lives waiting in line. But the researchers have also discovered that waiting in line isn’t our biggest issue. It’s the anxiety and uncertainty that we have chosen the right line. You know, like when you are checking out at Costco. The entire checkout area is crowed with customers choosing which line they are going to get into – and when you choose a line you notice you chose the slowest line.

Well, with “waiting for the Lord” there are only two lines to chose from – Wisdom or Folly. Last week I shared with you that the book of Proverbs underscores the fact that we are all “torn between two lovers” – The Woman of Wisdom or the Woman of Folly. The writer of Proverbs uses the literary devise known as “personification,” which is to represent an idea in human form. And in this case the writer uses two women to represent the two choices we have when dealing with real life situations. We can choose the Woman of Wisdom or the Women of Folly.

**The Ultimate Choice**

This morning we will look at “The Ultimate Choice” we must make between these two women as we confront situations in our lives. When you compare the Woman of Wisdom and the Woman of Folly you will discover that the main point of contrast between them is that Wisdom Waits and Foolishness Rushes In.

We will focus our attention on Proverbs chapter nine which is a high point in the book of Proverbs. In the first eight chapters Solomon, the writer of Proverbs, has written an appeal of a father to his son not to be deceived by the “get-things-quick” schemes of the Woman of Folly. The father pleas with his son to set his affection on the Woman of Wisdom who will brings satisfaction to all who wait. Actually, the book of Proverbs is a divine appeal of our heavenly Father to reject the quick-fix methodology of this world and to embrace the patient prayerful pursuit of the promises of God to all those who wait for the Lord.

Chapter nine of Proverbs is the climax to the Father’s appeal to choose. This climax is introduced:

*“Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at my doorposts. For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death.”* (Pr.8.34-36)

The chapter nine is divided into three equal sections: The Invitation of the Woman of Wisdom (1-6) – An Interlude (7-12) – and The Invitation of the Woman of Folly (13-18). Each section is the same length (6 verses). The rest of the book is a collection of proverbs for those who follow the Woman of Wisdom and concludes fittingly in chapter 31 with the “virtuous woman.”

Lets first read “The Invitation of the Woman of Wisdom.”

*Wisdom has built her house,*

*She has hewn out her seven pillars;
She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine;*

*She has also set her table;
She has sent out her maidens, she calls*

*From the tops of the heights of the city:*

*“Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!”*

*To him who lacks understanding she says,
“Come, eat of my food*

*And drink of the wine I have mixed.*

*“Forsake your folly and live,*

*And proceed in the way of understanding.”* (Pr.9.1-6)

**The Invitation of the Woman of Wisdom**

The Woman of Wisdom is an expert builder, “she *built her house*.” She didn’t throw some 2 by 4’s together. She is a real artisan, “*She has hewn out her seven pillars.”* She goes to the rock quarry and chooses large boulders and skillfully chisels the rock to make perfect round pillars. She is concerned with care and quality. Her house is spacious, strong and stable. Her house has precision and perfection underscored by the number 7 (completeness). She has prepared an exquisite meal paired with her own mixed wine. She has set the table with her finest place settings. No paper plates and napkins here only the finest china and clothes.

She sends *out her maidens* into the highways and along the hedges, and compels all to come in, so that her house may be filled. She, herself, *calls from the tops of the heights of the city*,“Come; for everything is ready now.Come immediately and sit down to eat. *Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed.”* Her house is large enough to welcome *whoever is naïve and lacks understanding.* No seats available for the “know-it-alls” and those who have it all figured out. The only thing needed for admission is to *forsake your folly and proceed in the way of understanding.*

Now lets look at the “The Invitation of the Woman of Folly.”

*The woman of folly is boisterous,*

*She is naive and knows nothing.
She sits at the doorway of her house,*

*On a seat by the high places of the city,*

*Calling to those who pass by,*

*Who are making their paths straight:*

*“Whoever is naive, let him turn in here,”*

*And to him who lacks understanding she says,
“Stolen water is sweet;*

*And bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”
But he does not know that the dead are there,*

*That her guests are in the depths of Sheol.* (Pr.9.13-18)

**The Invitation of the Woman of Folly**

The Woman of Folly is boisterous – persistent like a barking dog. She has built nothing of value. She sits at the doorway of her shack, probably because she afraid that it will fall down on top of her. She has nothing substantial to offer those who pass by, just stolen bread and water. But she still calls out with her enticing words of welcome.

“Pssst! This is stolen water and this is stolen bread. It is stolen and that’s what makes it so exciting and so exotic. You get instant satisfaction and you don’t have to do anything. Drink it! It’s sweet because someone else had to work for it. Eat it! It’s pleasant because you can enjoy it in secret. No one needs to know.”

Remember that the Woman of Folly is presented as an adulteress in chapters 5 and 7 so she is very familiar with gaining gratification from something that doesn’t belong to her. Stolen water, she suggests, is sweeter than drinking from you’re your own well. Stolen bread is more satisfying than eating from your own labor. But we all know that over time the sweetest will turn bitter and the bread will become molded.

Those who listen to the Woman of Folly discover that only the dead are dinning at her table. The one who consumes her words of deception discover that all her guests are in the depths destruction, devastation, and death on earth. “Relax,' says the Woman of Folly, 'I am programmed to receive. You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!'”

Standing in the middle of these two invitations is an “Interlude.”

*He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself,*

*And he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself.
Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you,*

*Reprove a wise man and he will love you.
Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser,*

*Teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,*

*And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
For by me your days will be multiplied,*

*And years of life will be added to you.**If you are wise, you are wise for yourself,*

*And if you scoff, you alone will bear it.* (Pr.9.7-12)

**Interlude**

At first this interlude seems to be out of place. But a closer look shows that the issue is not merely whether to choose Wisdom or Folly. The issue is what kind of person are you? Are you going to be a scoffer who indulges in the instant gratification of the flesh? “Just go ahead quit, leave, indulge in whatever will bring you pleasure, happiest, and makes you feel good. Or are you going to be the wise person who waits, listens, and grows in understanding?

If you choose to be a person of wisdom your days will be multiplied, years of life will be added, and you will grow in your understand of the Holy One. If you choose to be a scoffer you will bring dishonor on yourself and bear the outcomes of your decisions alone.

This interlude is a divine appeal of our heavenly Father to reject the quick-fix methodology of this world and to embrace the patient prayerful pursuit of the promises of God to all those who wait for the Lord.

**Conclusion**

Today you have the ultimate choice - to listen to this world or to listen to the wisdom of God in Christ. The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to write these words, *“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”* (Col.2.8) And that’s the point, we can be taken captive by the empty deceptions of this world or we can come to Christ *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* (Col.2.3)

God loves you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is not some literary devise – He is not a personification of wisdom. He is the wisdom of God in the flesh *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* (Col.2.3) In Christ is the true knowledge of God. In Christ is the full assurance of understanding. (Col.2.2) God does not want you to be deluded with persuasive words from this world. (Col.2.4) In Christ we have the divinely powerful weaponry to destroy *speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.* (2Cor.10.5)

The Bible tells us, *if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.* (Js.1.5)And some of you lack wisdom today. Some of you have been listening to the deluded and deceptive words of this world telling you to quit, give up, do your own thing, do want makes you happy. Grab it! Get it! Don’t worry about anybody else. You are being tempted, lured away, and enticed by your own lust. (Js.1.14) You might be depressed, discourage, or disillusioned. You might be uncertain about decisions that are confronting you. You might be emotional fried and feel like there isn’t any hope. But God’s says, *if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

Come to Christ today *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* (Col.2.3) If you have come before come again. There is no reentry charge. If you have never come the invitation is being offered to you.

Jesus is the incarnation of wisdom for us today. He has skillfully built a spiritual house. He has hewed out the perfection of God’s grace and He has set Himself as the precious cornerstone. He has prepared an exquisite meal paired with His own mixed wine. He has set the table. Everything is ready. (Mt.22.4) He has sent out His servants into the highways and along the hedges, and compels all to come in, so that His house may be filled. (Lk.14.23) He, Himself, calls from the heights heaven,“Come; for everything is ready now.Come immediately and sit down to eat. And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and recline *at the table* in the kingdom of God. (Lk.13.29) His house is large enough to welcome *whoever is naïve and lacks understanding.* No seats available for the “know-it-alls” and those who have it all figured out. The only thing needed for admission is to *forsake your folly and proceed in the way of understanding.*

Is that you today? Are you ready to be done with foolish things and give your heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the Kings of kings? You don’t have to have it all figured out you just need to come in, sit down, and wait to be served.

**Transition to the Lord’s Supper**

This morning we have prepared a Table for you. The Table behind me is not the table of this church or the table of this denomination. This is the Lord’s Table and all who are the Lord’s are welcome to receive from this Table. On this Table are the symbols of God’s grace through Christ – a little morsel of bread and a small cup of juice. The bread is a symbol of Jesus’ body that was given for us and the cup is a symbol of His blood that was poured out for us for the forgiveness of sin.

The Bible tells us that as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. (ICor.11.26) For on the day Jesus returns, those who have listened to the words of the wisdom of God will be ushered into a great banquet room and they will enjoy the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in the security of God’s grace through Christ.

But today is the rehearsal dinner. It is a taste of God’s great banquet of grace. This simple meal is for the entire family of God. For all those have listened to the incarnation of God’s wisdom and have come to Christ. By partaking of it you proclaim your faith in Christ and receive spiritual nourishment.

But the Bible tells us to examine ourselves before receiving the Supper. This morning I am asking you will examine your heart to see if we have been taken captive by the empty deceptions of this world. If so we need to turn away from worldly voices and come to Christ *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* (Col.2.3)

**Prayers of Preparation**

**Bread:** This is not stolen bread eaten in secret. This is the bread of Christ given to us so that we would have life forever. Eat it in remembrance of Christ

**Cup:** This is not stolen water disguised to be sweet. This is the cup of the Lord, the cup of blessing, poured out for us for the forgiveness of sin. Drink it in remembrance of Christ.

**Benediction:** *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. These are true words of God.*