

Preaching from St. Stephen's Pulpit

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Williamsburg, VA

August 18, 2024

Walk in the Way of Insight

[Readings](#)

[Bulletin](#)

Beloved by God, my siblings in Christ; grace to you and peace from God our Creator and our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

"The wisdom of the Proverbs is not simply a matter of intellectual prowess; it is a matter of spiritual maturity. Wisdom is the divine gift that enables one to see and live in harmony with the truth of God's creation and revelation."¹ This is not a book of scripture I often preach on, but I found Proverbs 9:6 fascinating: "Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight." This verse is much more than a mere piece of ancient wisdom; it's a call to embark on a deeper journey toward deeper self-understanding and spiritual growth. It invites us to move beyond a superficial existence, urging us to embrace a path illuminated by true discernment and profound insight.

The Book of Proverbs stands as a cornerstone of biblical wisdom literature, a guide meant to help us navigate the complexities of life. Within its pages, Proverbs 9:6 finds itself in a chapter that vividly contrasts wisdom with folly, personified as two distinct women. This setting underscores the urgency of choosing wisdom over foolishness. The phrase "simple ways" refers to a life marked by naïveté, shallowness, and a lack of true understanding, while "the way of insight" suggests a journey illuminated by deep comprehension and prudence. The stark contrast between these two paths highlights how crucial it is to choose wisely.

Our Lutheran perspective, grounded in the doctrine of justification by faith alone, places immense emphasis on God's grace as the foundation of human salvation. However, it also acknowledges the role of human reason and discernment, guided by the Holy Spirit and Scripture. In this context, wisdom is not merely a product of intellectual prowess but a spiritual gift that empowers believers to discern and apply God's will amid life's myriad challenges. The Lutheran concept of the priesthood of all believers further reinforces this idea, suggesting that every Christian is called to be a theologian of sorts, interpreting Scripture and applying its teachings to their own lives.

¹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 63.

We understand that the relationship between faith and wisdom is profoundly interconnected. Faith serves as the bedrock upon which wisdom is built, shaping the lens through which we view and interact with the world. Living out this faith means making choices that reflect this insight, guided by the wisdom found in Scripture and the Holy Spirit. This is where the Lutheran concept of vocation comes into play. Vocation is not confined to ordained ministry but extends to every aspect of life. It's about seeing our daily roles – in our work, relationships, and community involvement – as callings through which we serve God.

Walking the way of insight translates into practical, everyday actions. It means making thoughtful decisions, fostering strong and healthy relationships, and living with integrity. It's about discerning right from wrong and choosing paths that honor God. In a world filled with chaos and uncertainty, having the ability to navigate these complexities with wisdom and discernment becomes not just beneficial but essential.

Lutheran theologians have provided rich perspectives on the concept of wisdom. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for example, highlighted the significance of costly discipleship, suggesting that true wisdom is often forged through suffering and obedience to Christ. Similarly, Martin Luther's teaching on the two kingdoms – the spiritual and the secular – emphasizes the need for Christians to engage wisely in both realms of life.

Living wisely also carries profound ethical implications. It involves pursuing social justice by acknowledging and addressing the needs of the marginalized. Humility plays a crucial role here, preventing arrogance and fostering a willingness to learn and grow. At its core, love – the fundamental principle of Christian ethics – is the ultimate expression of wisdom, guiding us in our relationships with both God and others.

One common misconception about walking the way of insight is that it implies intellectual superiority or moral perfection. In reality, wisdom is not about achieving flawlessness but about earnestly seeking God's guidance and striving to make the best choices possible, even with imperfect knowledge. We often grapple with the tension between the promise of divine wisdom and the harsh realities of a fallen world. Suffering, injustice, and uncertainty challenge even the most faithful. Yet, it is in these very moments that the essence of wisdom shines through – not as a guarantee of a trouble-free existence but as a steadfast trust in God's grace.

Walking the way of insight is a journey of faith, marked by a continual quest for God's will and its application in our daily lives. It involves an integration of

theological reflection with practical action, recognizing the dynamic interplay between divine grace and human responsibility. Although challenges and misunderstandings may arise, the pursuit of wisdom remains central to the Christian journey. As we seek to faithfully navigate our complex world, the call to walk in the way of insight offers both profound guidance and enduring hope.

In John 6:51, Jesus declares, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” This statement reveals Jesus as the ultimate source of all sustenance and fulfillment. Just as physical bread nourishes the body, Jesus nourishes our souls, providing the spiritual nourishment necessary for growth and wisdom.

By partaking in the Eucharist, we consume the body and blood of Christ, ingesting the very source of wisdom and life. This communion fosters a deepening relationship with Christ, enabling believers to discern God's will more clearly and to live accordingly. As we feed on the bread of life, our minds are renewed, our hearts are enlightened, and our capacity for wisdom and understanding expands.

Moreover, Jesus himself exemplified the highest form of wisdom. His teachings are replete with profound insights into human nature, God's character, and the path to eternal life. By studying and applying these teachings, by walking the way of Christ, the way of insight, we can develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and our world. Jesus' life and ministry serve as a model for living wisely, demonstrating how to love unconditionally, forgive generously, and serve humbly. In following his example, we are invited to walk in his footsteps, guided by his wisdom and empowered by his Spirit.

Embracing the path of insight is a lifelong journey that requires both faith and diligence. As we strive to align our lives with God's wisdom, we find ourselves increasingly equipped to navigate the complexities of the world. By grounding our understanding in Scripture, particularly in the person and teachings of Jesus Christ, we can confidently walk in the way of insight. Ultimately, the journey towards wisdom is not merely an intellectual endeavor but a spiritual transformation, one that draws us closer to God and enables us to live lives that walk both the way of insight and the Way of Christ. Amen.