

Sermon Proper 15 B

St. John's Episcopal Church, Jamaica Plain

Anne Mansfield Minton

Have you ever received a dinner invitation and not been sure whether you wanted to go? Maybe you're not sure what you're supposed to wear, or who else is invited or maybe you're unsure about what food they'll serve. Suppose they serve something you really don't like? Then what? Short of throwing the food on the floor or slipping it to the dog under the table, what are you supposed to do with it if you really don't like it? So, dinner invitations can be mixed blessings sometimes!

But, today we have two dinner invitations to decide about. We are invited to dinner in today's reading from Proverbs and invited to another meal in St. John's gospel. And just as dinner invitations can sometimes be mixed blessings, so deciding to accept can be the beginning of a very different life for us. Real transformation is about accepting these invitations, coming in, sitting

down at table and eating a meal that we did not prepare, receiving our lives like food from God's hands.

In our reading from Proverbs, Wisdom invites us to come in and to eat the bread and drink the wine of wisdom, to find the way of understanding. The passage goes on to tell us that Folly is also in the doorway calling out to people, inviting them to dinner as well. So, as you are walking down the street you hear two invitations, and are required to make a choice—a choice between Wisdom and Folly. Wisdom invites us to understand what God wants for us.

And what that means is listening for God's leadings in our prayer and experience, allowing God to make us what God wants.

For some of us this may mean recognizing what God wants for us in the midst of a very painful relationship. We may realize that a relationship that we thought would last forever has not. For some of us it may mean finding God's will in the

midst of loneliness or isolation, in the face of old age and diminishment.

For some of us it is discerning God's presence in the midst of economic hardship, unemployment, illness or the suffering of family members. For some of us it is finding God's grace each day to deal with addiction to alcohol or other drugs or to challenge our own addictive behaviors, perhaps our obsession with work and meeting everyone else's demands. It may mean doing fewer things with much more joy.

For some of us it means looking at areas of our life and seeing where there is a lack of freedom or love and allowing God's healing mercy to come there into the hidden places of our lives.

For some of us who are content it means remembering that we are God's creatures, dependent upon God's grace for everything and that our gifts are given to us for service.

Understanding what God wants for us is a challenge. But, while we do not have a precise guide for every minute of our lives, we do have the

Scriptures and we have the church, we have one another, a discerning community.

And all three of today's readings talk about this discernment. They talk about a choice. Wisdom and Folly are both holding dinners. We may go to one or the other. In Ephesians we may join the community or live in the midst of evil days. In John's gospel we are invited to eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. We are being invited to a meal rooted in the cross. The discerning of God's will for Jesus led him to his passion and death.

This mystery of the cross is why we often fear discerning God's wisdom for us. And yet this should not surprise us. We are a community formed by and transformed by the Eucharist. Every Sunday we gather to hear the wisdom of God and to eat and to drink the wisdom of God who is Christ. As we come and gather around the altar today let us pray for ourselves and our community that we may accept with joy the invitation to eat the bread and drink the cup that wisdom sets before us. It is an invitation

that will change your life. You are invited to
dinner. Do you want to come?

May God make it so! Amen.