

Sermon August 15
First Presbyterian Church
Hackettstown, NJ

Let us pray:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen

It's been a long time since I told this joke if you have heard it previously, please forgive me. So here goes:

A kitty cat dies and goes to heaven and knocks on the gate of St. Peter.

The cat says, "Here I am!" St. Peter replies, "Wait a minute, let me check to see if you are on my list. Oh yes, here you are, you may enter. Now, it is customary with all our new arrivals to ask them if there is anything special, they would like to have here in heaven that they did not have on earth." The cat replies, "Yes, I have always wanted to sleep on a nice fluffy pillow." St. Peter says, "No problem at all. You go with these angels, and you'll have your pillow. I check back with you in two weeks to see how you are doing." "Great" says the cat, and off they go.

There's another knock at the gate. This time there are three little mice waiting at the gate. Again, St. Peter says, "Wait a minute, let me check to make sure you are on my list. Oh yes, here you are, may you come in." Again St. Peter asks the mice if there's anything they would like to have or do while in heaven.

The mice reply, “Yes, we all would love to have roller skates!” In astonishment St. Peter asks, “Roller skates?” The mice say, “Yes, roller skates. We always wanted to learn how to roller skate.” St. Peter replies, “Okay. You go off with these angels and you will get your roller skates. I’ll check back on you in two weeks to see how you are doing.

Two weeks pass and St. Peter encounters the cat and asks, “So how do you like it here in heaven?” The cat replies, “Oh, my pillow is just wonderful and the meals on wheels were really great!” 😊

Wisdom, thanks and Nourishment

You may be wondering why we have three scripture readings today instead of just two. Well, in the Episcopal tradition, of which I am well familiar, this is nothing unusual at all. In fact, we have four scripture readings each Sunday...two readings from the Old Testament, which includes a psalm read out loud by the congregation, and two readings from the New Testament which always includes a gospel reading of the day.

After studying the suggested scripture readings for this Sunday, I felt compelled to explore these three that I feel are definitely linked to one another and have important points I just could not ignore and needed to share with you.

In Proverbs 9:1-6, and Paul's letter to the Ephesians 5:15-20 we discover salient messages/themes. What strikes right off the bat is how Wisdom is portrayed as female. For it is the female who is traditionally responsible for the household running smoothly and with integrity. This home is built upon seven pillars. (Now the number seven is mentioned over 350 times throughout the Bible and therefore is a number of great significances. For example; the earth was created in seven days, the seven "I am" statements found in John's gospel.)

We all know that timeless saying, "The older I get, the wiser I become." Hopefully that true, but not all the time. Sometimes it appears just the opposite. For some, the older they get the dumber they become. I cannot help but interject a quote the actor George Clooney attributed to the late fellow actor Robert Mitchum, "I never learned anything from hearing myself talk!" Wise words indeed.

What then does wisdom entail? Perhaps wisdom enables us:

Insight

Knowledge

Common sense

Ethics

Intelligence

Understanding

Compassion

Discipline

Discretion

Fair Judgment. Just to name a few.

Paul certainly used wisdom as a base when he warned in his letter to Ephesians, “Be careful how you live.”

“Live wisely” in other words think before you say or do something foolish or may regret.

“Make the most of time” or to quote my own mantra, *“Life’s too short, and so am I 😊*

Or in other words, *“Never let yesterday, use up today.”*

Paul continues, “Do not be foolish.”

Rather, “Be filled with the spirit.” In other words, embrace the hope and optimism of the Holy Spirit. “Giving thanks to God the Father at all times and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

So very true, isn’t it? To praise and give thanks for all the blessings of this life. Our friends, our family, our pets, this precious earth. To do the best when and wherever we can. To permit Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to feed and nourish us.

You here at First Presbyterian are such a wonderful, caring community with a dedicated, vibrant congregation and staff. I apologize ahead of time for embarrassing her, but I must recognize one of your true treasures here, Lorinda Ravo. Not only is she a consummate musician, organist, and choir director,

but a one fantastic spiritual leader as well. That you Rindy for all you do.!

As Jesus so boldly states in today's gospel

“I am the living bread.” (John 6:1)

In subsequent chapters of John's gospel, he states:

“I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12)

“I am the door.” (John 10:9)

“I am the Good Shepherd.” (John 10:11)

“I am the resurrection and the life.” (John 11:25-26)

“I am the way, and the truth and the life.” (John 14:6)

“I am the vine; you are the branches.” (John 15 15:5)

There's that number seven again!

The first of these powerful “I am” statements, “I am the ***living*** bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats **of** this bread ***will live forever.***”

In other words, whoever is nourished and feeds upon (listens) Jesus' words, actions and believes he is the truly the living son of God shall have eternal life. Eternal life via Jesus' sacrifice of his body and blood so we may be redeemed.

So then, Wisdom has built her seven new pillars found in the
New and Living Testament

They are:

One Body

One Spirit

One Hope

One Baptism

One Lord

One God

One Faith

May we welcome and fully embrace wisdom and all she affords
us via the living and everlasting power and grace of Jesus Christ.

Amen