The Way of Prudence

A Play About Wisdom for December 17th

Characters: Narrator

Prudence

Patience

Sapiens, the Wisdom Dog

The Good Elder Grimsley

Props: Shawls and bonnets (for Prudence and Patience)

Dog dish or large metal bowl

Puritan hat or black robe (for Elder Grimsley)

NARRATOR: The “O Antiphon”—an ancient Advent prayer—for December 17th reads as follows, “O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence.”

This longing for wisdom is centuries-old. In these days of preparation for the coming of the Messiah again into our lives, we, too, seek wisdom wherever we can find it. In this short play we travel back to the days shortly following the first Thanksgiving, when the Pilgrims wrestled with the meaning of wisdom in their lives. We join Prudence, Patience, Elder Grimsley and, of course, Sapiens, the Wisdom Dog!

*(Players enter stage area as though in heated debate. Sapiens—a happy-and-strangely-attentive dog enters with other players, carrying his eating dish.)*

PRUDENCE: But Elder Grimsley, thou must understand: Friend Patience and I do not wish to change thy understanding of what is right. We seek only to add wisdom to what thou doest. Goodness knoweth, thou needest all the help thou can get!

*(Sapiens puts down dog dish and sits attentively, watching and listening. From time to time, Sapiens adds a disagreeing “Woof!” to the conversation.)*

PATIENCE: Yea, Elder Grimsley, Prudence sayeth wisely. We do not question thy judgment in matters concerning the colony. We only seek to help. We, too, wish to rid our lives of … *(Dramatic pause) …* STUPIDITY!

ELDER: *(Over-eloquently)* Thy help is not needed, sisters. If we are to rid our colony of this dread evil, we who have taken the mantle of leadership must guard and protect the entire assembly. Our hopes must be focused on those few among us who are willing to sacrifice everything for the good of all.

God knoweth that our ministry is clear: Where stupidity reigneth, we shall impart knowledge. Where stupidity flourisheth, we will cutteth off its tiny buds and roots. Where stupidity crusheth good, we will stomp on its ugly head until discernment in all matters spiritual and temporal hath been brought back to life.

PATIENCE: But dear brother Grimsley, how can we rid the entire colony of this great evil if only a few good folks among us are protecting us against this harm? How can we wish for great wisdom to enlighten so many when so few are doing battle against *(Dramatic pause) …* STUPIDITY?

PRUDENCE: And what if the few are themselves are infected with the very evil they seek to displace? Thou rememberest Sister Hester Pryne? God help her!

*(Other characters nod in assent, except for Sapiens, who “woofs” and shakes head “NO”.)*

*(In his eagerness to be involved in what’s going on, Sapiens has edged close enough to Elder Grimsley that he bumps up against the Elder. Sapiens may even sit up and paw Elder Grimsley tentatively, as though to get attention.)*

ELDER: Ah, sisters, thee need not worry thyselves needlessly. Thee needst only satisfy the needs of thy spouses and thy children. Need I say more?

*(Now noticing Sapiens, the Wonder Dog, and speaking totally out-of-character, in his real voice.)*

Say, whose mutt is this, anyway?

PATIENCE: *(Surprised at the presence of Sapiens.)*  We thought this creature camest into this drama with thee. Hast thou not a faithful dog for thine own?

PRUDENCE: Yea, we trow not whomest this noble beast belongeth to. Perhaps it hath come into the wrong script?

ELDER: *(Still out of character)*  Either that, or the dumb thing is trying to beg food off us. Probably missed its Thanksgiving Party at the kennel. *(Now collecting back around himself his original character, and addressing the two women)*  So, let thee be off to thy tasks on this glorious day, while those of us who lead prepare ourselves to dispose of this malevolent iniquity.

*(Sapiens now begins to make more urgent dog noises, trying to grab attention, as though wanting to say something.)*

PRUDENCE: Wait! Methinks this friend has something to say. Perhaps it tryeth to tell us something important. Perhaps we should try to speak with it. *(Thinking for a moment)* What is it, Lassie girl?

*(In order to guess what’s happening, Sapiens and the other characters now get into a pseudo game of human/dog charades, which might include face and hand gestures/hints, some woofing and grunting on the part of all characters.)*

PATIENCE: Are thou trying to tell us something, Clifford?

ELDER: Frank the Pug, is that thee in that costume?

PRUDENCE: I knoweth! This is surely Snoopy!

PATIENCE: Flipper? Bugs Bunny? Dogbert?

ELDER: Garfield? The Grinch that Stoleth Christmas?

*(Sapiens is getting a little exasperated with the process; groans and sighs at their efforts.)*

PRUDENCE: *(Finally giving up)*  Prithee tell us, good friend doggie. Who art thou, and what is it that we shouldest know?

SAPIENS: *(Coming into full character, standing/sitting tall, and using authoritative voice)* It matters not who I am, but it does matter what I have to tell you. Listen wisely, friends!

You seek to rid yourselves of… *(Dramatic pause) …* STUPIDITY. But you have yet to define its nature. You name it as an evil, but you have yet to name its many dimensions. You seek to replace it with wisdom, yet you have no idea how to battle it.

PATIENCE: So what are thou saying, friend doggie?

SAPIENS: I am saying that you may not know the difference between… *(Dramatic pause) …* STUPIDITY and a hole in the ground. You might name it in others, but can’t see it in yourself. You call out its evil, but can’t feel its claws grabbing you. You may claim to wish for wisdom, but still secretly wallow in foolishness.

ELDER: Surely thou meanest not all of us!

SAPIENS: Sadly, I do. From my vantage point, I see a lack of wisdom everywhere. Even among those who would promote it.

PRUDENCE: But how dost we gather wisdom if… *(Dramatic pause) …* STUPIDITY is so much a part of us? Prithee tell us, good creature?

SAPIENS: For starters, cease your babblings around *(Dramatic pause) …* STUPIDITY, especially that which you see in others. Then take time to be quiet. Read and listen to what God tells you in the Scriptures and in the lives of others. Pray and wait for God’s answers.

ELDER: But what of the fight against this evil of … *(Pauses, catches self and bumbles to next phrase)…* er, uhm, of which we were, we are, so much afraid?

SAPIENS: The fight has already been won, the battle over. Wisdom has come down from on high. God’s righteousness has triumphed. There is One whose life gives us hope for wisdom, whose teachings we can follow, whose example provides focus for our yearnings. His name is Jesus, his life an open book.

PRUDENCE: *(Looking at her fellow Pilgrims)*  This maketh some sense, good friends. Good friend doggie speaketh a truth for all ages. Perhaps we have sought in vain for what we already have. Perhaps we need return only to what we already know. Perhaps our salvation is already at hand.

SAPIENS: Now that you understand, I must be going.

PATIENCE: Wait, good doggie! We needest to ask thee more. We would learn more from thee. We have much to ask…

SAPIENS: *(Interrupting with a gracious paw)*  I know that this is true, Patience, but you must now take this small truth and grow it into a tree of wisdom for yourself and all who know you.

PATIENCE: Thee meanest that Prudence….?

SAPIENS: *(Interrupting again)*  Patience, Patience! *(Pause for doubled meaning to sink in)*  That’s right, Prudence should show the way for others to follow. *(Starting to exit)*  So that they can learn the way of God’s wisdom.

ELDER: *(Calling after Sapiens as he leaves)*  And what might they call this new way? And what might we call you?

SAPIENS: Call it… *(Absolutely the last dramatic pause in this sketch)* “THE WAY OF PRUDENCE.” And you can call me “SAPIENS, THE WISDOM DOG!” *(Short pause)*  And don’t forget to spell “dog” backwards….!

PATIENCE: *(Not quite understanding)* What a good doggie!

ELDER: Yea, verily, a noble animal….

PRUDENCE: *(Getting the picture)*  Nay, friends. What a good God!!

*(Players exit)*