

WISDOM AT THE CROSSROADS

The Rev. Geoff Parker to Foreside Community Church - Falmouth, ME

Thursday, June 13, 2019

Scripture: [Proverbs 8:1–4, 22–31](#)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SCRIPTURES

So, you might have gotten the theme for today, in which a lot of churches particularly reflect on what it means for us that we describe God as three-in-one, or, as “Trinity.” This is not an easy thing to do, being that this is a tenet of Christian faith that is not really present in the Scriptures so much... it was a later addition to our faith, read out of the scriptures, not contained within them.

Now, I am a good trinitarian minister. Everything I do or think, I do in threes. Still, I recognize that this is not a part of Christian theology that a lot of people interact with, or give a lot of prominence to, in their lives.

But it is good to be reminded that the Trinity is one of many ways that our ancestors have wrestled with conceptions and visions of characteristics and character of God... And so,

For reasons that I can only say are the best reasons, I have found myself having wonderful discussions about who God is... The beautiful part of those conversations is that, as I understand it... we can talk about God only as much as we can underline both the wonder and mystery of God... your experience of God may be vastly different than mine... and neither can ever manage to enclose what we might mean when we talk about God.

So, today, we have this reading from the book of Proverbs in the Hebrew Scriptures. Today, we hear a creation story... told by a whole new narrator in our Bible... and we ponder what this new description of God may bring to light...

SERMON

“Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.” says Wisdom.

I think many (maybe most) of us aspire to be wise. What that means for us probably varies as much as we vary in delights, sorrows, skills and abilities, weaknesses and fears. Yet we strive to be a people who know things, perhaps nowhere quite as much in a community like ours where lots have devoted as much as a third of their lives to learning, and maybe much more to teaching. And we definitely strive to know in a tradition such as our own in which we have linked learning in all categories of life with learning about the nature and work of God.

We want to know... but I think wisdom doesn't just mean knowing... most everyone I've ever asked has had a bright line between being “smart” and being “wise.”

King Solomon, [the scripture says](#), asked God for wisdom so that he could be a good ruler for others. He was, and he wasn't... but that's what he hoped his wisdom would be good for.

So maybe, wisdom means knowing something for a greater purpose.

So, in a book about knowing, Proverbs... enter Wisdom, the woman, who comes to teach us about purpose. If you're wondering how our Bible, which loves to tell the story of one God and one God alone, and often likes to use Father imagery about that God, introduced a female character who was in the beginning of all things along side God... well, join the club. It's kind of an allegorical device used for the education of young (yes, male) students or scribes... Wisdom is one kind of woman. Foolishness another... In case you were thinking it was just Hollywood movies that kind of set women up as objects to be chased after...

Nonetheless, we can be thankful that there is are real words and real thoughts that the woman Wisdom has to share. There is something about her words here that is beautiful, poetic... which stirs something in us. Wisdom knows the delight of watching creation spin into being. Wisdom watched us become ourselves. Wisdom was God's collaborator and encouragement as everything took shape. She was there to delight in God, and God in her. This story is a love story between God and Wisdom.

There is something about God that wants to be in relationship.

However we conceive of God, we almost always find the Holy connected:

In the Gospel of John, as the Word was with and was God in the beginning.

In the Trinity as the Creator, Son, and Spirit weave their dance, in which no one is equal to the others, no one is part of the others, yet they are all one. If it makes your head hurt, you may be thinking about the Trinity just right, by the way.

And here, present at the beginning, God and Wisdom are together in creation. **Wisdom delights in creation and its dance, and in the whole human race.** That may be the best test for wisdom: is it taking part in the dance of creation? In the beauty and wonder of all of its varieties? Does it delight in, and bring delight, to humanity?

Like the woman Wisdom, we are in relationship, with God, but also with all creation... and that is part of how we discover exactly who we are... it is part, I think, of how we become wise.

“A tree gives glory to God by being a tree...

This particular tree will give glory to God by spreading out its roots in the earth and raising its branches into the air and the light in a way that no other tree before or after it ever did or will do...

For me to be a saint means to be myself. Therefore the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am and of discovering my true self.

Our vocation is not simply to be, but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny...” .

I think that “our” is larger still... wisdom is to find the shape and calling of our life which gives joy and life not only to us, but to creation or the other as well.

I think far too often it is easy for us to look for a smart answer, a smart solution... and not take into full account the heart and spark of others. I don't know about you, but I know I need this reminder of what *true* wisdom is, some days.

We need wisdom in these days. We need the dance and relationship of the Holy in these days... We need to delight in the wholeness of humanity. Because there too many examples of “thinking” that excludes and divides.

This week, our community and others heard the news from our neighboring city of Portland [more than 250 asylum seekers](#) will be coming to seek safety and shelter there. In what gives me hope of the wisdom of our communities and our churches, people have been rushing to both (and this is important) **ask, and hence, learn what is needed and offer what is needed.** Our own Dotty Blanchette has been gathering information for how we can best be a supportive neighbor, and we are glad to share that with you today, and going forward.

As we have seen recently, our work to welcome, reunite, and restore families who are fleeing from danger and violence is not only good service to those who, regardless of zip code, Jesus called our neighbor... it is indeed how our community is refreshed and renewed... how we learn and grow... and become more wise.

This week, I'll travel with 12 other representatives from Maine to the General Synod of the United Church of Christ. Every two years, we get together in something like a big reunion event: we worship, we celebrate together... we also listen deeply to one another, and take action and witness to where we see God calling our church to speak out, to welcome, to pray without ceasing.

In what I experience as a gift of the Spirit, the resolution that I have been asked to wrestle with as part of a committee of delegates is called: [Addressing the State of Global Forced Migration](#). As it currently is written it calls the church into action and to voice to work for a reduction in xenophobia and bigotry related to those who are seeking asylum, and to work for an increase of understanding of the complex web of global patterns that is producing this pattern... and create more just, safe, and whole

I will ask you to pray for us, and for us as the church; pray for wisdom... I will pray for you, too. I will pray for our church. Pray that we continue to look for how God has called us into Holy relationship, three-in-one, and one to one, Holy many as one... discovering the wisdom that has been with us, before the time of time itself... in love with God, and with all creation. Amen.