

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31
Psalm 8

Romans 5:1-5
John 16:12-15

This weekend is commencement weekend for Lincoln Public Schools. Lariah Smith will be graduating from East High beginning at noon today. Nash Jack graduates at 4:30 today from Lincoln High. On this commencement day, they will commence on a new stage in their lives, many going on for more education. It is an exciting time. Many parents have the perception that getting into the “right” college can be an important first step toward a successful lifelong journey. They believe that a degree from a prestigious university can open doors to employment upon graduation, and networking advantages for advancement all the way to retirement. The most elite, prestigious schools admit a small percentage of the applicants: Stanford accepts 5.1% of their applicants; Massachusetts institute of Technology accepts 8%; Yale and Harvard accept 6% of their applicants. Some parents are employing the services of what are called independent educational consultants, who will assist with the application process. Fees for such consultants can go from \$1,000 to tens of thousands of dollars.

Presbyterians have had a long history of supporting education. Most Presbyterians would more than likely agree with what President Obama said at his Rutgers University commencement speech recently, “Ignorance is not a virtue.” There is a particular denomination that has it in its constitution that education will never be a requirement for any office in that church. As Presbyterians we are just the opposite. Our pastors are required to attend three years at a theological seminary after they graduate from college. Presbyterians have had a long history of establishing schools and colleges not only here in our nation, but all around the world. We value education.

There is a portion of the Old Testament that is referred to as wisdom literature. They are the book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job, and there is some wisdom literature found in some of the other books. Ellen Davis, Professor of Old Testament at an Episcopalian seminary, declares that wisdom, for the biblical writers, meant “living in the world in such a way that God, and God’s intentions for the world, are acknowledged in all we do.” Those who have wisdom “live their lives day by day, even moment by moment, in a way that honors and glorifies God.”

The book of Proverbs is exactly that, a book of proverbs. Proverbs are usually short, crisp two line sentences dealing with some aspect of life’s experience. We may think of some of Benjamin Franklin’s proverbs: “Have you something to do tomorrow? Do it today.” “There are no gains without pains.” “Diligence is the mother of good luck.” Examples from the book of Proverbs include, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy one is insight.” Proverbs declares that wisdom is that of “fearing God. To fear God does not mean we are to be afraid of God, but that we stand in awe of God, a God what we praise. Some other proverbs found in the book of Proverbs includes “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver and gold.” “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.” Many of these proverbs deal with ordinary problems that hinder a person from attaining fullness of life, such as laziness, drunkenness, unwise business dealings, and so on. Unfortunately, there is one infamous proverb: “Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.” For a long time that proverb was a justification for corporal punishment. And, I’m not going to talk about that this morning!

Here in Proverbs, wisdom is personified as a woman! The Greek word for “wisdom” is Sophia. It is feminine. There is a feminine aspect to the Divine! Wisdom was created by God at the very beginning. She was there at the beginning, witnessed all of creation, and worked alongside as a master worker: “I was beside him, like a master worker. She was co-creating with God.

You may be familiar with Michelangelo’s painting of The Creation of Adam on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. God’s finger and Adam’s finger are almost touching. This could represent the spark of life when God created Adam. points his reaches out to Adam. Do you see the woman who is at the left side of God. We really don’t know who she represents. God has her arm around her. It could be Eve. it could be the Virgin Mary. Perhaps it is Sophia, Wisdom, sharing God’s excitement and delight in the fresh new world and its inhabitants. Note the playfulness that Wisdom expresses in our passage, “I was daily his delight, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.” Some consider the NRSV a bit weak in its translation of the element of play. There is a sense of playfulness in creation, and wisdom was co-creating with God.

I like that image: wisdom personified as a playful co-creator with God. It excludes any thoughts that creation is a closed system operating according to its own fixed laws. A common form of this belief is what is called deism. It is as though God made a watch, wound it up, and set it aside to let the watch operate on its own. Thus God created the world, and allows it to operate by its own law of physics. This idea of God’s playfulness carries with it the concept of God’s immanence, that is, God is ever present in our lives and that God is continually involved in creation. As an aside, let me say that God being

continually involved in creation makes room for evolution! God is not done with creation!
God is not done with us!

Thus God welcomes our co-creators. How do you co-create with God? What piece of creativity do you claim? Can we be so audacious to claim that our creating is divinely inspired. Poets, musicians, artists, even preacher claim that their work is inspired by God. What have you made, what have you created, that made you the proudest? A meal, a garden, a vocation, a perspective, a child, a sense of recovery, a vital church community, an inspired mission. What makes me most proud is Ramona' rhubarb pie! What have you done to playfully co-create with God?

If wisdom is to live our lives in a way that honors and glorifies God, then how do we, in our co-creating, how do we honor and glorify God? It is not because of our own strengths and talents, but because God works with us and we work with God. We begin by simply acknowledging that God works with us. It is to point to God, and not to ourselves. It is to give God the praise, give God the credit. We use our co-creating to point to God. It is not to use for our own personal gain. I am not saying we are not to accept pay for the work we do. Sometimes we do. Sometimes we don't. We all have to earn a living. Wisdom points to God. It is not limited to what we do in the context of church but what we are doing all the time and everywhere. We are God's creatures, co-creating in God's creation with the Creator God, a God who continues to create.

How majestic is the name of the Lord our God. Amen!