

Rev. Jennifer Peters McCurry
Emanuel's Ev. Lutheran Church, Bellevue, PA
May 30, 2010 • Trinity Sunday C
Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Wondering together

We all have moments when we experience a sense of wonder. I had one the other day when the sky opened and there was a grand downpour. Or when I watch baby Peter exploring something that is new to him. Whether you have children or not, I hope that we all know people who help us experience wonder in our daily lives.

Ultimately, today – Trinity Sunday – is a day of wonder. As disciples of Christ, we celebrate the mystery that God is. For centuries, pastors and bishops and theologians have tried to put the church's understanding of God into words. We try to encapsulate the mystery so that we can explain what we believe.

Many of the passages in the book of *Proverbs* do not dwell in wonder at all. The book consists of short, pithy sayings that might be good advice for someone learning the paths of life. Often they don't mention God at all. Because of that, *Proverbs* can seem like an odd addition to the Bible. The self-help sections in our libraries and bookstores are gigantic. Guidance is available for all times and ways

of life. They offer four, five, seven, or twelve steps to something better. Authors are trying to unpack the mysteries of living life, so that we can live better lives.

Co-Creating Wisdom

Our passage today shares the God-connection, and the wonder, that grounds the entire book of *Proverbs*. It expresses wonder about how wisdom relates to God and fits into God's world. This was one of many readings that paved the way for Christians to later understand God as one – and three – all at the same time.

I'll start in the middle of the passage (verse 22), where the God of Israel has a partner in the act of creation. Wisdom was with God, created or set up, before the rest of God's creating work began. She was there for everything that God did. What's interesting is that the original Hebrew words are a bit ambiguous. Our translation renders verse 30 as: "I was beside him, like a master worker." It brings one kind of picture, doesn't it? A master craftsman, working right next to God.

However, the same Hebrew word means a "little child" or a "nursling" and different scripture translations use it, instead. "I was beside him, like a little child." (*Prov. 8:30*) It's this second possible translation that helps paint a beautiful picture for me, along with the verses that follow. "I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him

always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.” (*Prov. 8:30-31*)

I see a picture of God going about the work of creation with a little one on God’s knee – 1 or 3 or 5 years old. There’s something so wonderful about having a little friend, even if you’re not related to them. We get to see the world through their new eyes. There is joy and delight with flowers that spring from trees, beautiful sunsets, and giant puddles to jump and splash in. This is the wonder of Wisdom in creation. It finds joy in all God’s works. And God responds to the playfulness of Wisdom. God delighted in this childlike wonder. They celebrated together the beauty and the poetry and the rightness of all of creation. We see an image of God as a parent whose child, Wisdom, is deeply involved in the adult work.

We Christians associate God’s Wisdom with Christ, the Word made flesh. All of God and God’s work are united with Wisdom. When we look around our world, we usually see blessed Wisdom inherent in how nature was made. The word “science” is based on the Latin word, *scientia*, which means knowledge. The disciplines that we now consider “the sciences” – like biology, chemistry, and physics – first developed in the middle ages. Christians, often monks and priests, were studying the details of our world to behold God’s fingerprints on creation. In recent years, some political debates (like the use of reproductive technologies) are

about choosing which ethical framework should accompany our society's scientific endeavors. When science began, we didn't have this problem. Very dedicated Christians sought knowledge about God's Wisdom in the world. Science was bound to and wrapped up in the life of the church.

Wisdom Among Us

God's Wisdom is not only embodied around us or at a distance. Earlier in our passage, Wisdom is personified, but this time as a woman. Wisdom calls, and raises her voice. She doesn't stand back, either. She takes her stand on the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads, beside the gates, at the entrance to the portals. "To you, O people, I call and my cry is to all that live." (*Prov. 8:4*) It is not that Wisdom is just accessible to all. She truly wants for all to encounter her. She calls out loudly, in the middle of the people's lives. She doesn't hide out and ask people to track her down. She doesn't require a retreat or classes. Wisdom shares herself amid the comings and goings of life. Whether we want to or not, we find her along the way. Perhaps it's Wisdom that doesn't take long to discover: "Close your windows when you hear and smell rain." Perhaps it's something that takes many years to learn: "The pain of losing loved ones never goes away, but it slowly gets better."

Wisdom is found in the ways that God re-creates us through our lives. We encounter her at junctures in life: when the path changes slightly, and we find ourselves in a new place; and when we discover that God's way is a different way than we thought.

Wisdom shares answers to our questions, and solutions to our problems. Some times we plug our ears as she calls out to us. Some times we don't hear her correctly and have to try again. Some times we forget Wisdom, and make the same mistakes. It is times like now when we need to look and listen for Wisdom's help amid the crossroads of our journeys. For our congregation, as it discerns about ministry and money – for our world, as it deals with the effects of a disastrous oil spill.

Whenever we hear her truly and respond to Wisdom, we are drawn closer to God. With gifts from God's Wisdom, through Christ, we are renewed and re-created as humans. We are reminded of the wonder of all God's works and creation.

I would like to close with a prayer by St. Thomas Aquinas:

God of vision, wisdom, love and mercy, we hear your attributes proclaimed. We sing your praise. We bow beneath your majesty. You have taught us that by respecting and responding to who you are, we find the wise way. Teach us how to build upon that firm foundation, not the manipulating wisdom that achieves our own will, but the palace of wisdom that celebrates your work and will in this world. Amen.