To Add to the Confusion

A meditation for Trinity Sunday

[Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31](http://www.textweek.com/writings/prov8.htm) Romans 5: 1 - 5

Rev. Cathy C. Hoop Grace Presbyterian Church June 16, 2019

If you’ve spent any time in church at all – and even if you haven’t – you can name at least one of the creation stories. We tend to teach children some melding of the two stories: the one that walks through the days of the week in a bizarre progression, (Let’s be honest – plants before sunshine? Can we please stop trying to make the Bible a science book and appreciate its stunning poetic truths?) coming to a wonderful completion with the formation of humans; and the one from Genesis 2, in which God makes Adam, then animals and finally, Eve, from Adam’s rib. There is also a lot of talk about rivers!

It often freaks people out to learn that there are two creation stories. When they learn that the stories don’t match, they start biting their fingernails. It makes people worry that the Bible has…*inaccuracies!* It makes them nervous about how to read the Bible and what to do with the things that cause us to go, “hmmm.” But I love that the Bible opens with two distinct versions of how everything began. It’s a gift to be received, not a problem to be resolved. It is an invitation to experience God in a myriad of ways. Not unlike the idea of the Trinity, the three in one.

So let us add to this complexity around God and creation and the Trinity, and throw Proverbs 8 into the mix. Proverbs 8 offers us one of those rare moments – a glimpse into God’s delight with the world. I enjoy walking my neighborhood around dinner time, catching a peek of the activity in the windows. Sometimes I see a young family gathered at a table, sharing a meal. Other times, the gathering is large, and the noise spills out of the house, past the yard, to the sidewalk. Gathered as family, gathered as friends, gathered as community to rally around an important issue. Meaningful reasons to gather. People struggling, people laughing, people enjoying the gifts of the earth around the table. Life in community.

And today, we are standing outside God’s house, as God and Wisdom, gather to retell a creation story. Honestly, Wisdom isn’t very good at sitting still; she’s too busy dancing around the room! Why don’t we read this passage from Proverbs more often? We need *this* very image more than ever! We need to take a walk, and peek through God’s window, and watch as God and Wisdom dance and laugh and celebrate together. What an amazing image, and one we so seldom read.

Wisdom, as experienced in Proverbs gives theologians absolute fits. Some say Wisdom represents Jesus (a precursor to John’s interpretation of Jesus as the Word), others identify Wisdom as the Holy Spirit. Again, I say “Amen” to a little uncertainty, a little mystery. Wouldn’t it be boring, and too easy, if everything about the life of faith was spelled out in neat block letters? *Although, we would have much less to fight about*.

Watch out, because here comes Wisdom. She is going to stand on the street corners, like that missionary at the intersection down on the Strip yelling through a bullhorn. But instead of screaming about heaven and hell, Wisdom says things like:

“Honey, get your life together!”

“If you love God, you hate evil!”

“Wisdom leads to justice!”

“Pursue knowledge, not money!”

“*Honey*, get your life together!”

She sounds like your mother as you head out the door to your first day of your very first real job, or as she waves goodbye after dropping you off at college. Always encouraging, always loving. Offering love rather than instilling fear. She offers her advice, and describes a life led in wisdom. Then, there is an abrupt shift, and she begins to tell her story, her “autobiography” as the CEB titles this portion of the text.

We hear of her birth (which can take us into complex theological debate) and then we hear her version of the creation story in which she describes being a co-creator with God.

“When God marked out the foundations of the world, I was right there!” says Wisdom. Though the translation of verse 30 is uncertain, the possibilities include, “I was there as a “master of crafts,” or “I was there as a master worker.” Wisdom labors with God, and it is joy-filled work! *I was having fun, [says Wisdom], smiling before [God] all the time, frolicking with [God’s] inhabited earth and delighting in the human race. (Prov. 8: 31)*

Friends, if this tells us anything about the nature of God, it is that God is a God of relationship. God’s best work emerges out of relationship. God delights in being in relationship with us! We cannot celebrate the trinity without celebrating relationships. Even in the act of creation, God does not work alone. God labors side by side with Wisdom, to create even greater community. Rev. Alan Brehm writes on his blog, *The Waking Dreamer,* “Since love requires a counterpart, it should come as no surprise that God has counterparts in the Bible—especially Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit.  This one God who is three exists in a relationship of love and community with one another.  This is central to our faith, because the love it represents is the basis for everything God does—including both creation and salvation.”

*(http://thewakingdreamer.blogspot.com/2013/05/gods-delight.html)*

But let’s take it to an even simpler level. When you ask people what they love about their church, they might offer a variety of answers, but you will always hear, “they were with me when I was hurting. “They were there when I lost my spouse,” or “they were there when I lost my job,” or “they took care of me when I was in the hospital.” I have never met anyone, who, when faced with something frightening, simply wanted to be alone. When tired or stressed, grieving or confused, sure. Solitude is necessary; solitude can be a friend. But when frightened, we need others. We need people to hold our hand, or stand beside us while we cope, maybe provide a little comic relief.

Julie Polter, one of the editors of Sojourners’ magazine, reflecting on the Trinity wrote these words:

"This is the big lie that the world tells us: The world is connected by trade agreements, electronic banking, computer networks, shipping lanes, and the seeking of profit—nothing else. This is the truth of God: Creation is a holy web of relationship, a gift meant for all; it vibrates with the pain of all its parts; its destiny is joy."

(Sojourner’s Magazine, Oct. 1994)

Believe in a God who longs to be in relationship with you. God comes to us in diversity, knowing that our lives will have many seasons. At times, it is a Savior whom we most deeply need to meet. We need to turn to the stories of Jesus and his radical love. Other times, we need a loving parent God, a God of both discipline and presence. But throughout all the seasons of our lives, the many twists and turns of our faith journeys, the Spirit is always present to us. She is dancing in delight over you. She is dancing with joy that she witnessed your birth. She will hold you in your sorrow and sustain you in your darkest hour. For she cannot live apart from relationship.

Our triune God calls to us with a voice of love, welcoming us into the dance of life. So dance…dance like no one is looking. They actually are looking, but they look foolish when they dance, too, so it’s okay. We are in this together. We are in this *together*.

Thanks be to God. Amen.