

Wisdom Calling

Trinity Sunday 22.5.16

Divonne and Gingsins

Proverbs 8.1-4, 22-31 and John 16

Coming to worship on Trinity Sunday is a humbling reminder of how limited our grasp of the truth about God will always be.

Yet today as we delve into Scripture we glimpse a very different picture of the Holy Spirit from last week's Pentecost experience of the powerful wind and flames and languages. In our Proverbs passage we are taken on an imaginary journey back to the beginning of time and creation to discover that the Spirit has been here all along..

Before we embark on this adventure – a little bit of context about the Proverbs literature through which we are looking at the Holy Spirit.

1. **The book of Proverbs belongs essentially to the oral tradition** - passed on by word of mouth from one generation to the next (as today!). For the majority of proverbs - the author is the community. Many of the proverbs recorded in the Bible emerged out of the ancient wisdom movement centred around Egypt / Mesopotamia / North Arabian Tribes – including pagan.
2. The book of Proverbs is understood as **part of the Wisdom literature of the Bible** – together with Job and Ecclesiastes. Job especially tempers the rather black and white outlook of Proverbs – with their emphasis on cause and effect– that if you do this – all will go well. Job, in contrast, argues that ultimately what matters is not how life works out around us – but how we relate to God whatever the circumstances.
3. Today's Proverbs gathered into Chapter 8 encourage us to be **open to a philosophical view of God's nature** - with Wisdom as the feminine entity within the Godhead.

So, today on Trinity Sunday, we will look together at aspects of the Holy Spirit which are sometimes overlooked.

Chapter 8 of Proverbs is a beautiful piece of poetic prose – almost Shakespearean in style. Rather than an exact science – **it awakens a truthful imagination for us.** So it is that throughout this last week the playful imagery has really captured my imagination. As I read it out loud – I found myself wanting to almost dance – at least stand on a stage and proclaim it in oratory fashion! Raising my voice – as wisdom calling on the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads... “to you O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live!” Indeed this is WISDOM to be heard rather than read – pondered over, allowed to sit in the casket of your belly – as the ancient Egyptian sages suggest, for at least a week, or more, to release fresh wisdom into our lives.

The feminine personage of Wisdom calls out to us, almost taking us by the hand on an adventure back to the beginning of creation – saying: “Come with me, listen and behold just who I am!”

A father recently described how he searches high and low, scratching around for wisdom to help him be a good parent. This search resonates with all of us in our different challenges – wisdom to live by and to live well. In this passage we encounter Wisdom raising her voice in all the public spaces – up on the mountains, on the roads where people travel, at cross roads – junctions – as people enter the towns and buildings. As Christians, we affirm that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom – but that doesn’t confine our search to within our sacred spaces. As one author writes, “If the Christian faith claims to speak of the truth, it must have some correspondence with the truth we can learn from the natural sciences, philosophy, modern psychology, and the attempts of artists to grasp the mystery of life.” All of us will have different media that speak “wisdom” into our lives – maybe visual arts, literature, poetry, theatre and dance, nature, sport.. the list is endless – **if we are open to the Wisdom of God** addressing all people: “the species of homosapiens” – the wise man (!) arguably – marked out for their capacity and desire for wisdom.

Having been invited to listen up, Wisdom then calls us to leap into the playful dance of creation.

“When there were no depths I was brought forth..

“Brought forth” also translates, “whirl, dance or writhe”. We are beckoned to fly in our imagination in this vibrant dance. You get the sense that at the beginning of time the Spirit of Wisdom writhed into being and ever since has danced where she will, untameable and free. God is depicted as the artist cum creator drawing circles, moulding land, marking out boundaries and foundations. There beside him is the master worker – the architect of Creation – Wisdom.

Then we arrive at the climax of the dance as the lens shifts from creation to Wisdom herself:

“I was beside him..

“I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race”!

I was enchanted to read this – and a bit taken aback. Western theology has tended to emphasise fallen humanity – our rebellion against God. Yet here we are told that Wisdom delights in the human race! This came home to me starkly when I recently prayed with someone – and the gist of the prayer was one big SORRY – for not being good enough. Yet – here we read that in spite of our mistakes and all of us falling short of the mark – the Wisdom of God – delights in us!

Not only delighting in us – but wanting to play with us – Another arguably more accurate translation of “rejoicing” is “**playing**” before him continually, **playing** in his inhabited world.” There is a strong emphasis on play as part of Wisdom’s nature – and part of the way we relate to God.

Wisdom is calling us out to play. Although theology is often thought to be a rather serious and sombre business, this picture of a boisterous divine Wisdom playing with and delighting in humans invites a playful

theology – as we seek to turn our minds and our hearts towards the things of God.

I think this is part of what Jesus meant when he said that “Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Maybe we need to grow up enough to rediscover the child in us – as we seek after God. **JOKES!!**

You will all have your own encounters with the creative and playful wisdom of God. One compelling example I came across recently was in the true story of the group of wounded ex-services personnel who made up a choir for the Invictus Games 2016 in Orlando, Florida. They were brought together under the expertise of Gareth Malone. Through music and the intuitive, pastoral care of their choir leader – all the members of the choir make a journey towards greater healing in spite of all their painful pasts. The Wisdom of God is gently, and vibrantly present in their courageous creative act of composing and singing their own song..

Wisdom calls us out to play with whatever gifts God has given us. Our playful approach to the Triune God is part of our worship, offering ourselves back to God who delights in us. Theologian Martyn Percy remarks: “*All our theology is but intellectual fumbling for truth – which goes on eluding us. Each insight on the Trinity represents a signpost along the way – as does this poem about Wisdom – yet it is in worshipping the Trinity, not understanding it, that you begin to enter the divine reality of God.*” (Martyn Percy, 2013, p.4)

Let’s take the final 2 verses of this passage with us into the private and public spaces of our lives this week. As the proverbs are meant to – I encourage you to suck the sweet of these words over the coming days – allowing the flavour to seep out and into your lives – **bringing a playful, worshipful approach to God for the coming days:**

*“I was beside him, like a master worker;
And I was daily his delight
Rejoicing before him always,
Rejoicing in his inhabited world
And delighting in the human race.”*

