

THE FACE OF WISDOM

Proverbs 8:1-4; 22-31 May 30, 2010

Pilgrim Bud Precise

We got on the Kumbi – I was going to Groblesdal – about 45 minutes away – excited as it was my first time to go somewhere by myself. No other PeaceCorps volunteer was going with me. I was to shadow Kim Perez, a volunteer up in the Northern Province for the week. I was a little anxious, didn't know much Zulu, but had worked on how to catch the kumbi. As it turned out, language didn't matter as the people working at the kumbi rink were speaking Northern Sutu. A kumbi is a modified 12 passenger van to hold 15 people. Fare from Moteti (my village) to Groblesdal was 2.5 rand – about 35 cents American money. We waited for more passengers. A kumbi will not leave until it was filled – 15 passengers.

The wait could be a few minutes or maybe 30 minutes. As we waited, these street vendors kept walking around our Kumbi. they wanted to sell us their wares – a banana, a mango, maybe a cigarette. "Great price! You need one!" Our text today begins with a scene that reminds me of those street vendors. Wisdom is standing by the gates of the city shouting out to people, hawking her wares. She is asking everyone who passes by to get some wisdom from her.

It is not a very uplifting image of wisdom, is it? Today is Trinity Sunday in the church year. Trinity – that vague concept the church invented to try to help define God. The church invented this concept to say $1 + 1 + 1 = 1$. Well, I learned in second grade that $1 + 1 + 1$ does not equal 1. The church sings about 3 in 1 and talks in generalities about the spiritual concept – God-Son-Spirit, or Creator- Redeemer – Sustainer. There is some truth there, but it really won't preach to me. The Christian faith does not happen when we encounter a person who says "think about me." Faith is about what happens when Christ says, "Follow me."

Enter our text for today. Proverbs refuses to put God high and lifted up, distant, unapproachable. In our Proverb text wisdom is a personified – made into woman wisdom. The Hebrew word for wisdom – Hokmah – is given a face – and Hokmah is a feminine word. This poetry of Proverbs reminds us that wisdom was created by God at the very beginning of creation. Wisdom is no afterthought. Wisdom is pictured as the architect of God's creation. She was there when there were no springs gushing forth water. She was there when the mountains were shaped and the hill brought forth. She was there when God

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made the first bits of soil and established the heavens and the sea. She was like a master worker, God's daily delight.

This proverb's text is about wisdom's identity. It portrays who she was, where she was, and how she was helpful. It explores her manner of support and companionship with God. The heart of our text declares the reasonableness of the world God has created. Remember the Genesis account of creation? Creation is declared "good" by the creator. "God said that the light was good. God saw that the Earth was good.

God saw the plants and seeds were good. God saw the two great lights were good. God saw that the creatures and creeping things were good. The cattle and beast of the field were good. God created humans and they were good.

God saw everything that God had made and behold, it was very good." To me that is one of the great affirmations in the Bible. Down deep, at the very base of things, the world is a trustworthy, good place because it was created by a good God. If we take a look at our psalm lesson for today, this creating God is not some unthinking, unseen, uncaring power - but rather a kind, rational person. It talks of the work of God's fingers, God's hands and that in spite of our feeling small when we stand beside the ocean, in spite of our seeming insignificant as we look at the millions of stars in the sky, God cares for us human beings. Proverbs wants us to see wisdom as a helper to God. Wisdom was/is a co-creator with God.

Do you see yourself as a co-creator with God? What piece of creativity can we claim? Dare we believe our creativity is divinely inspired? I have heard of people who think they are inspired by God. Poets. Musicians. Artists. Writers - even preachers. They claim their work is inspired by God. And I believe it is and can be. What about us ordinary people in this world? Can we claim this connection with God? Let me ask you to think of your life, your work. What have you made that caused you to feel most proud? A meal. A garden. A vocation. A stance on social justice. A child. A sense of recovery. A sense of identity. A mission. A vital church community. These things created with your wisdom and with an aspect of wisdom are a part of God. Do you see yourself alongside God in the creative process? I hope so.

I believe we need to trust God. I also think we need to trust our own wisdom and the wisdom of those about us. You can name some wise people today that you trust. We try to be like them. We see God's creative spirit in them. I know that too many people presume to speak for God these days. I thought the letter to the editor in the Birmingham News this

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week pretty much hit the nail on the head. In speaking of two of our gubernatorial candidates, the writer said she could not tell if there were running for Governor or for head preacher of the state of Alabama. God is involved in presidential campaigns. God is used by some in pious ways to show how one is purer than the other. God's name is used to fight wars and make enemies. That is not the creative process Proverbs is speaking of today. *Wisdom does not lend itself to such abuse.*

Wisdom is an ability to discern right from wrong. It has the ability to see through the façade of those using religion for personal gain. Wisdom gives life. Wisdom has been here since the beginning of creation. It urges us forward. It calls us to claim our true self. Wisdom sets us free to become the Children of God we are called to be.