



TOUCH POINT

God and the Wise Little Girl – Touchpoint for June 8, 2022

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31 (NRSVUE) Does not wisdom call and understanding raise her voice? On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: “To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all who live.

“The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths, I was brought forth when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth when he had not yet made earth and fields or the world’s first bits of soil, when he established the heavens. I was there when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

“Then I was beside him, like a little child, and I was daily his delight, playing before him always, playing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.”

Grace and Peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

“Then I was beside him, like a little child, and I was daily his delight, playing before him always, playing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.”

I’m going to do a couple of word studies with you today. I know, I know, I should be doing all this in my study beforehand and not bothering you with it. But the Hebrew language is such an interesting language because it is often so vague to our western minds. It often has multiple meanings, and we westerners, who are so into facts and certitude, find it confusing and frustrating at times.

Richard Rohr once said, “If I turned in papers as open to misunderstanding, false interpretation, and even heresy as most of Jesus’ teachings are, I would never have passed my theology courses. He couldn’t have been concerned about exact words, or he would have learned to speak Greek, instead of the philosophically imprecise and very different Aramaic.”

In light of that, there is this one word in the verse I quoted at the beginning of this Touchpoint, and it is a word that can have two very different meanings.

“Then I was beside him, like a **little child**, and I was daily his delight, playing before him always, playing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.”

Now this word for “little child,” can also mean something like an “architect,” or “craftsman.” And that is where almost all translators go with it. Some don’t even include it. Don’t ask me how it can mean two totally different things – I don’t know.

And I suppose “architect” fits with the immediately preceding verses that talk about creation being constructed. But they don’t fit the following verses:

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

That sounds more like a little child, doesn't it? I mean, who doesn't 'delight' in a little child. Just ask first-time grandparents. And little children delight in the created world in ways us grown-up adults have long since forgotten.

So I want to use this translation and image of a "little child," and have a little fun with it today.

BUT FIRST...

This coming Sunday is Trinity Sunday in the church year. So I suppose I should say something about it. So here goes.

This coming Sunday is called "Holy Trinity Sunday" in the church year. It is the one Sunday in the church year when pastors get up and give a sermon – actually it's more of a lecture – on something that is incomprehensible. They analyze, breakdown and dissect the concept of the Holy Trinity, to such an extent that often you are left with nothing but a dead theory, a dead concept, and a dead God.

Sometimes I think what we do on Trinity Sunday is what we often do with many aspects of our faith life, whether it be the Bible, our theology, or even our own personal experience. We dissect it so thoroughly and seriously; we end up with the dead corpse of that which was supposed to bring us life.

And so I am not going to do that today. If you want to know where I am at with this whole concept at age 66, it can probably be stated this way:

The Trinity concept is trying to tell me that God is not a singular, stand-alone entity.

God is relationship.

God is verb. God is movement, dance, flow. If God is love, love requires both a lov-er and a lov-ee. God contains both. And anything that lives in relationship with anything else, therefore, lives within God. God doesn't just cause things to exist, God is present within the relationship of those things.

OK. I'm sure I just committed more than a dozen heresies in those last few sentences. In fact, in researching this topic I found an article entitled, "Dear Priests: The Top 5 Heresies to Avoid This Trinity Sunday." I think I only committed 4 out of the 5. But since I couldn't understand them all, I can't be sure.

NOW, back to this passage from Proverbs...

Here, Wisdom – Sophia (is this God's Holy Spirit?) – is described as God's delight. God delights in **HER**.

The words used here are so similar to the gospel of John and his description of Jesus as the Logos:

"In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came through him..."

And this from Proverbs:

"Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth... Before the mountains had been shaped, I was brought forth... When he established the heavens, I was there..."

So which is it? Wisdom or Logos (Word)? They are both described as the ordering purpose of creation. Is it He or She? Is it the second or third person of the Trinity? Or neither?

Does it matter? I'm sure some systematic theologian would want to lecture me on the difference here.

All I know is that this passage speaks of God's Wisdom as "delight." Which is news to me, because I never equated wisdom with delight. Wisdom looks like Morgan Freeman or some old guy with long white hair and a white beard...

Not that there is anything wrong with being an old guy and having long white hair and a white beard. I find it to be a rather 'good look,' if I may say so myself.

But no, the word in verse 30 that is sometimes translated as "master worker" can also be translated as "little child," as I mentioned earlier.

So Wisdom isn't a thoughtful old wise man, in deep thought, with a serious look on his face, sitting alongside God as God creates.

No, Wisdom is more like a little girl giggling and delighting in creation.

Wisdom is like a little girl sitting alongside God at creation and laughing and giggling as God creates the giraffe and hippopotamus.

And then God says to her, "Watch this, I'm going to create some really silly creatures, and they are going to bite into an apple because they think that will make them be like me."

And she delights and laughs even more... and one can't wonder if God giggles with her.

"... and I was daily his delight, playing before him always, playing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race."

After reading this passage, I can't help but wonder if I'm not way more serious than God? I mean, when was the last time I took childlike, joyous delight in creation AND being human?

And I think back to when my boys were little. They would tear off their diapers and run naked in the backyard and jump over a water sprinkler, and fall down and laugh uncontrollably. This unabashed and uninhibited joy at being alive and in creation.

Or when was the last time I laughed and giggled my way through a time of prayer and contemplation?

The last time I remember doing that was in church with my brother when we were very little, and our parents didn't laugh with us – they smacked us upside the head, but not hard enough to make us yelp. That would have disturbed the quiet sanctity of the church service (and made them look bad!!!).

No, just hard enough to get our attention.

A silly memory of a good friend comes to me as I read this passage. This is from a few decades back. He was a retired pastor. A pastor's pastor. Straight laced and by the book. Old school. I visited him in his later years. And one of the last times I visited him, his granddaughters or great-granddaughters were over. I don't remember which. He was sitting in his easy chair and they had surrounded him. If I was going to talk to him, it was going to have to be through the madness and chaos of little children.

His granddaughters had decided that day to put their beautician skills to work. While his hair was not very long, it was long enough to be put into pigtails. Five or six if I remember. His mascara made him look more like Alice Cooper than anyone else, but the eye shadow and glitter more than distracted you from that.

His cheek rouge and blush didn't really match his lipstick, but he didn't seem to care. As I talked to him, I saw a gleam in his eye and smile on his face that was unlike anything I had ever seen. They were his delight.

He was home.

“Then I was beside him, like a little child, and I was daily his delight, playing before him always, playing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.”

You know, maybe it would be wise of me to set up a time for something other than a ‘prayer time with God.’ Maybe it’s time to have something other than a ‘serious conversation with God,’ or a ‘come to Jesus moment.’

Maybe it’s time to set up a play date with God... and brush up on my beautician skills...

Somehow I don’t think God would mind... At least according to the Wisdom of a little girl I just read about.

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Song

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

Spirit of the Living God

(Celtic Spirits)

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Life of Christ Renew Me

(Margaret Rizza)

Life of Christ renew me, Way of Christ direct me,
Truth of Christ restore me, Peace of Christ surround me. *repeat*

Word of Christ instruct me, Prayer of Christ enrich me,
Work of Christ inspire me, Light of Christ shine through me. *repeat*

Cross of Christ redeem me, Pain of Christ be in me.
Bread of Christ sustain me, Fire of Christ enflame me. *repeat*

Breath of Christ flow in me, Strength of Christ support me,
Joy of Christ uplift me, Love of Christ transform me. *repeat*

Peace of Christ surround me, Light of Christ shine through me,
Fire of Christ enflame me, Love of Christ transform me.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Robert Stone, The Cambridge Singers, John Rutter)

Benediction

My Peace

(Keith Duke)

Peace to know, Peace to live,
Peace to show, and a peace to give.
It's a peace to share and a peace that cares.
My peace I give unto you. My peace.