

Trinity Sunday, Year C

5/22/2016

[Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31](#)[Psalm 8](#)[Romans 5:1-5](#)[John 16:12-15](#)**Sophia's Call**

“Bob Wiiiiick!” I remember my dad describing the call of my grandmother telling him it was time to come home on summer evenings. Bob Wick is what she called him when he was little, and he said that no matter where he was, he could always hear her calling. “Bob Wiiiiick!” Her call could be heard from at least a mile away, and could cut through any other sounds that tried to distract from it. He knew, whatever he was doing, he better drop it and run home. Even as a boy he was wise enough to know not to delay when my grandmother called him home, and he knew that something delicious awaited him on her table.

It's hard to believe that another school year is ending. The dog days of summer are upon us. It will soon be that at the close of summer days, as our eyes behold the vesper light, it will not be uncommon to hear a name called out from a front porch, beckoning sons and daughters home for dinner. Maybe these days some of those calls home will come in the form of a text to ever-present mobile phones, but how ever delivered the calls will surely come: parents calling their children home, recalling them to a place of nourishment, rest, safety, and togetherness around the table. Sometimes the calls distract from something fun: mud holes and fireflies, tea parties and hopscotch, video games and movies, or other adventures that will seem too enticing to be left behind

at the moment. Sometimes that call will be a welcome one to rumbling stomachs and tired limbs heavy with the need to be filled and restored.

That voice calling us back home after a long, summer day is not unlike the divine voice of Lady Wisdom calling out to all humanity in the reading from Proverbs. “To you, O people, I call,” she says, “and my cry is to all that live.” Lady Wisdom, aka Sophia (since that is how you say “wisdom” in Greek), is personified in this passage as the one who acted in partnership with the creator at the beginning of all things; who, indeed, provided the plans. It is through the personification of Sophia that Proverbs foreshadows the Trinitarian idea, casting her in some ways as the Holy Spirit, and in others as the one who would become incarnate and fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.¹ “When he established the heavens,” she boasts, “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 master worker.” Compare that to the gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.” Wisdom and Word are one in the same, and are not unlike the Spirit or wind or breath of God described in Genesis 1 that hovered over the waters in the beginning of creation.

Since today is Trinity Sunday, this reading fits in nicely with that great, virtually inexplicable doctrine. I’ll spare you an attempt to explain the Holy Trinity. The best word

¹ Dianne Bergant, *The Catholic Study Bible (Second Edition)*, ed. Donald Senior and John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 797 (OT).

of explanation comes from what's known as the Creed of St. Athanasius which you can read sometime when you're bored in church—this morning's sermon being an exception, of course. It's found on p. 864, and states at one point, "The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible." Yep. That about sums it up. The Trinity is *incomprehensible*, and nearly all analogies meant to make it easier to understand end up being heretical in one way or another. Yet, at the risk of being a heretic, when I think of Lady Sophia's call I'm reminded of one analogy that speaks to me. The call itself has three parts: the creative mind interacts with a person's breath to speak a word. This speech-act I'm performing right now has those three parts in my thought becoming breath, forming spoken word. Like the call of my grandmother from her porch heard by a son whose feet were quick to move in response, making the wise choice.

It's hard not to wax a little poetic when talking about such a deep, incomprehensible mystery as the Trinity. That's what mysteries are for. Not the kinds of mysteries we are meant to solve, but the kind of unexplainable mysteries meant to be pondered. I believe that's the wisdom of the Anglican tradition. We are not a people who believe all mysteries need solving, but are content to appreciate the beauty and wonder of them.

That doesn't mean we reject reasoned and rational responses to questions. On the contrary. It simply means that we believe God's Wisdom communicates with human beings in a couple of different ways: first, by the truths that are observable, and second by truths that are revealed. Some things come to us by divine revelation, like the truths communicated through the scripture and tradition of the Church; some things come to us

by reasoned observation of the world with both the rational and intuitive parts of our brains. One is not higher than the other, both are of equal value, they're just different, and come to us through different means. It is unfortunate that so many people believe that there is some kind of wall between science and religion. There is no conflict between the two, for both are truths that we gain by asking different questions. Science asks questions about facts and data, and religion asks questions about meaning. Both things are true, because all truth is God's truth. All wisdom is God's wisdom. That's why the Christian can look at a scientific theory like evolution as saying something about what scientists observe about the way nature works. Then, the Christian can look at the first two chapters of Genesis to understand what it all *means*. Wisdom is present in both.

If you want a little proof, just look at Lady Sophia's words in Proverbs. "My cry is to all who live." The cry isn't just to religious folk, not just to church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or ashram, but for all in every public space. Her discourse goes on to mention "the heights," the highways and byways, "the crossroads," and the "gates in front of the town." The gates of a town in ancient Middle Eastern culture were the public venues where legal cases were heard and decided, they were places to gather for justice and learning. Wisdom's voice is available out in the open, in the world, in the public square, in courts, schools, offices, and alleyways, not simply in places separated from the world. She also talks about her partnership with God in the handiwork of all creation, so her call is heard in the mountains, valleys, fields, fishing holes, swamps, and deserts.²

² Richard Boyce, *Feasting on the Word*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, *Year C, Volume 3: Pentecost and Season after Pentecost 1 (Proper 3-16) (Kindle Edition)*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), Loc. 1101-1107.

One writer describes it this way: “If the Christian faith claims to speak of 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 God is not the prisoner of the Christian church. We must expect him to be present and at work also outside the sphere of those who know about and depend on Christ and the Bible.”³ Wisdom’s voice is everywhere if we only choose to hear it. She is heard everywhere, but it is in the church that we come to know whose voice it is that we are hearing, and how to distinguish Lady Wisdom’s voice from her counterpart, the voice of Lady Folly.

If you’re wondering where you can find God, then, the answer truly is everywhere. God’s Spirit of Wisdom is present anywhere and everywhere we turn. I met her this week when our eighth graders graduated, and our school community gathered to celebrate all that our students have learned in their time here, and all their accomplishments earned through her guidance. She mesmerized me with a story from a friend of doctors healing a patient with a new procedure that would have been unheard of just a few years ago. I encountered her in the news when I read about the folly of politicians making degrading remarks about women, and the courage of people standing up instead for human dignity. Sophia and I crossed paths when I saw someone helping a homeless young person downtown to get a hot meal. To my delight she was present in the sunrise over Lake Pontchartrain when I went for an early morning run, and in the words of a song coming through my headphones. When I stopped for Morning Prayer she

³ Boyce, Loc. 1107.

awaited me in our chapel, and spoke to me of mysteries too big to comprehend, and assured me of Christ's love and hopes for me, and for the whole world.⁴

My dad felt safer going farther and farther from his home as he grew up, partly because he knew that, if he listened, he would hear my grandmother's voice calling him from greater and greater distances. Her voice was strong, and he knew it was important that he not miss her call. He felt the freedom to go further down the road, knowing her loud voice would be there to call him home for refreshment later. The Church, I believe, becomes that kind of place we're called back to, a place of refreshment to process Wisdom's voice that we hear out in the world. It's the place that provides a deeper sense of meaning to that voice. It helps us get to know her better so we can hear her when we're away because we're more and more attuned to her voice. But, as the author I quoted earlier said, she is no prisoner of the Church. She is alive and active in the world and in the Church, and wants us to learn and grow more deeply into relationship with God in both realms of her truth, observed and revealed.

The Spirit of Wisdom is adventurous, even playful, and calls us forward into life as on exciting summer days for new discoveries; and like a loving parent is also the one who always calls us home, calls us back into relationship around the table for a nourishing meal with one another and with God, and asks, "What did you learn today? What do you think it means? How will you share it?"

⁴ Jeff Paschal, *Feasting on the Word*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, *Year C, Volume 3: Pentecost and Season after Pentecost 1 (Proper 3-16) (Kindle Edition)*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), Loc. 1261.

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