

New Store/Maysville Presbyterian Churches

June 12, 2022

Partners From the Beginning

Proverbs 8:22-31

Psalm 8

If one were to be on the street corners of most major, and more than a few smaller, cities, one would hear the sermonizing of itinerant street preachers telling any who would listen that the world was coming to the end. And, that God has condemned the world to the fires of hell unless one repents and believes. The persistent image these people paint is that the world as we know it and live in it is bad; and that only those special to God will experience the joys of a heavenly existence that is truly exceptionally good.

Now, I believe there is a good heaven, the place Christ speaks of, where the risen and ascended Jesus resides with God. I also believe that God didn't create this world in which we live to be bad, as if it was some failed experiment that God wants now to destroy. Both of our Scripture passages speak of God caring for, even delighting in, the world, the cosmos in which we live, explore, experience, and know.

Origin stories have been around, well, since the beginning. Anthropologists note that every civilization, every tribe, every family, every individual has an origin story. People want to know these

beginnings. Anybody raised in the South, upon meeting someone new, asks, almost unconsciously, "Who's your momma?" That question comes out of wanting to (a) know where you come from, and (b) what is our connection with each other. It's an origin thing.

Philosophers throughout the ages have sought answers to those two questions. Where do we come from? To whom are we related (i.e., connected)? From these questions come others: How did we come to

live where we do? Who brought our family, clan, tribe, community into being and in this particular place, and how? Questions that lead all the way back in time to: Who created the heavens we see above, the earth on which we stand, and the waters that delve in the seas?

Again, the writers of our texts this morning attempt to provide some answers. In *Psalms* 8, we hear how God who created the universe and all that is in it holds all of humanity in mind; that is, God cares intimately for us humans — as a species of creation and as individuals in it. Our text from *Proverbs* points to a similar care of creation and takes it a step further, in describing a divine co-creator known as Wisdom. This divine being is not so much a creation by God, but one who was begotten — birthed, if one can envision, as a full part of God. According to *Proverbs* (and elsewhere), Wisdom was with God at the origin of our cosmos and “...was beside [the Lord] like a master worker... rejoicing in [the Lord’s] inhabited world and delighting in the human race.”

Down through the ages, people of the Judaic-Christian tradition, have spoken about God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Granted, these descriptions are more common on the Christian side of things, but still, there seems to be a three-fold identity to the God Jews and Christians believe in. Traditionally, taking from the Gospel according to Matthew, we Christians use the language of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — the Triune God — the Three-in-One. We also have spoken of the Holy Spirit as bringing wisdom and understanding to our belief in God in all God’s manifestations.

Now, if this has gotten too philosophical, I understand. But, it all points back to our first two questions: Where do we come from? and To whom are we related? The Good News is that like Wisdom, we come from God who created everything. With the Psalmist we acknowledge that we are a little lower than the angels, but are still beloved by God. In this current, crazy world, it’s good to know this. As simplistic as the old Sunday School song sounds: “Jesus loves me; this I know; for the Bible tells me so...” Jesus who is God coming in human form loves us — each and all of us — and knowing we are

human form loves us — each and all of us, and, knowing we are loved when things get more than challenging, when we begin to despair, and our fears and anxiety threatens to overwhelm us, and we don't think things can get better, or that we are not loved, know that God does, indeed, love us gives u that crucial lifeline to continue moving forward. Knowing we come from a loving, caring God allows us to persevere.

Secondly, such knowledge helps us remember to whom we are related — in short, to everybody and every living thing. We are integrated into all of creation. Oh, sure, our limited capacity to comprehend such relationships often reduce such to “us and them;” to separate ourselves from others who share God's good creation. The writer of *Proverbs* tells of how Wisdom delights in God's creation and in the presence of God daily. How do we both take delight in and continue to partner with God in sustaining this amazing world we inhabit?

I may have told you this before. One of my nephews was in middle school in Nashville. Now, he is Jewish — his mother, my sister, married a Jewish lawyer and became Jewish. The school he was attending was one of the top private Christian schools in Nashville. In English class, they were studying how oral traditions became sources for creative writing. The teacher asked everyone to bring in their Bibles. Mark complied and brought his Hebrew Bible. The teacher had everyone turn to *Genesis 1*, and asked for volunteers to read the first couple of verses. Mark raised his hand and after being called on, began to read: “*As God was beginning to create the heavens and the earth....*” The teacher, fully expecting to hear the words we learned as children, stopped Mark and asked what version he was reading from. Told it was the TANAKH, the teacher came around to look at it. Of course, it was all in Hebrew.

Asked if Mark could read it, he was then asked to read the 23

rd Psalm. Dutifully turning to the “front” of his Bible, he proceeded to read that passage. The teacher then told the class to wait, and he went down the hall to get the lead teacher for the Language Arts department and upon return, showed him Mark’s Bible. After again demonstrating that he could read Hebrew, he was asked to read *Genesis 1:1-5*, in Hebrew, then in translation. Both teachers then commented that the ongoing, continuing work of Creation as indicated in the Hebrew conjugations, put a new light in their understanding of how to view God, the Holy Spirit, and creation itself.

Two points are illustrated: First, God is continually at work in the world, in spite of what Mr. Jefferson and many of colleagues believed at the time, and, second, God created a creation with the Spirit of Wisdom and called it good, putting us as stewards for its ongoing care.

We are called as Partners in the ongoing, continuing work of God. To share God’s love, offer God’s grace and mercy, be God’s peacemakers, and witnesses to God’s hope and promises. So let us recommit ourselves to the task.

Let us pray: Almighty, good, and gracious God, we return to You all praise, blessing, and honor. For You have created a good world and universe in which we live. By the co-work of the Spirit of Wisdom, You brought forth all that we have and in which we delight. As we see our roles as more than simple conservators of this world, help us

to move our perspectives to a larger role, one that is in partnership with You in the care and sustainability of what You are continuing to create. We pray this in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

