



“I Would Believe Only in a God that Knows How to Dance”

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Scripture (ERV):

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

8 Listen, Wisdom is calling.

Yes, Understanding is shouting for us.

²Wisdom stands at the top of the hill,
by the road where the paths meet.

³She is near the entrance to the city,
calling from the open gates.

⁴“I am calling out to all of you.
I am speaking to everyone.”

²²“The Lord made me in the beginning, long before the Creator did anything else.

²³I was formed a long time ago, before the world was made.

²⁴I was born before there was an ocean, before the springs began to flow.

²⁵I was born before the mountains and hills were set into place,

²⁶before the earth and fields were made, before the dust of this world was formed.

²⁷I was there when God set up the skies, when God drew a circle in the ocean to make a place for the land.

²⁸I was there when God put the clouds in the sky and made the deep springs flow.

²⁹I was there when God set the limits on the sea to make it stop.

I was there when the Creator laid the foundations of the earth.

³⁰I grew up like a child by God’s side, like a skilled worker,
laughing and playing all the time.

³¹I played in the world God made and enjoyed all humankind that God put upon the earth.

Sermon:

Last week we celebrated Pentecost.

Today, we celebrate Trinity Sunday according to the liturgical calendar. Somebody asked me, “what’s that”?!

Truth be told, I think it’s a theological issue that doesn’t really burn up the headlines any more.

But it used to!

The early church fathers, whose letters and sermons were instrumental in distilling the shape of Christian teaching, were pretty excited by the threefold nature of God.

They needed to find language to explain how Christians understood the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Their neighbors simply said, three gods. Jews who were new converts to this budding religion, said that God was One.

How to reconcile the three aspects of God in Christianity and still maintain connection to the great monotheistic religion of Judaism, that was the womb of Christianity?

If I tell you that there were some profound theological ideas thrown around, in Greek and in Latin, surely you won’t be surprised?

Might it help if I tell you that Christians came upon these few words to help us understand the relationship among the three: “three persons, sharing one substance”.

Was that helpful? Hum...try this: “the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son”.

Hmmm. Yes, it’s right there, in the Nicene creed in the back of your hymnbook.

Still, it doesn’t excite you (or me) too much...does it?

In recent years, many of us have longed to get away from the “gendered” language of the classical Trinitarian formulation that is spoken throughout Christianity in prayers and blessings, “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”.

Of more interest to me, and possibly to you, is the *action* of Father, Son and Spirit.

Some of us have begun to use the language that describes the action of the three in one: “in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer”.

I know I like it better!

But there is more that can be added to this conversation about the “economy” of the Trinity, the action of the Trinity.

And I look to the Eastern Orthodox church theologians to give us a hint...calling the nature of the action of the Trinity, “perichoresis”.

And what does this mean? Literally, it means “dancing a round”.

God clings to both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, in a divine dance. Sometimes you can see it in icons and paintings, this divine dance.

And in Proverbs, this morning, we hear an echo of that, when we hear that Wisdom has been with God since the beginning of Creation and she was with God, before anything else was “brought forth”.

“Brought forth” in the original language can literally be translated “danced forth, whirled forth”.

And suddenly, this quote from Friedrich Nietzsche, is on point! Sure, he was a nihilist and was speaking from a deeply suspicious worldview, but the image of a dancing Creator works for me!

We have wondrous images before us, from scripture and from the church’s great teachers of long ago...a God who dances all things into being, and a God who dances still, with the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit...whirling around, laughing and playing with all creation, endlessly creative and joyful!

What comes to your mind when you hear God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?

Two guys and a bird?

An old white guy, a young white guy, and something that looks a lot like a pigeon?
Something forbidding?
Something medieval?

Try something else: try a dancing God.

Try a God so creative, so delighted with beauty and light, with mountains and hills and so excited by humanity that it is play to be in our midst. Delight. Joy. Fun.

³⁰“I grew up like a child by God’s side, like a skilled worker,
laughing and playing all the time.

³¹I played in the world God made and enjoyed all humankind that God put upon the earth.”

So, spoke holy Wisdom in Proverbs.

And down through the ages, Christians have heard her song of delight and some of them imagined God, three in one, dancing in delight, playing and laughing with the creation.

Let go of the fearful, dreadful, dire and cruel god that you were taught to fear.

Embrace the dancing , laughing, joy-filled God, three in One, who plays with us.

Yes, us, even in our brokenness! Laughing and delighting in us, and in the creation.

- The God of Genesis 1, who looked at the creation and called it good.
- The God of the gospels, who loved us, walked with us, healed us and fed us, and in the name of divine love, died for us and rose triumphant over death.
- The God of Pentecost, whose passion is for our human reunification, our community and communion as a human family, with our hearts and our lives healed through love; transformed into lives filled with hope and healing power.

Surely, we too can look around and delight? Look around and take a little dance step or two in celebration of the goodness of creation, and the endless creativity that created, creates still, and wills to create into eternity?!

I, I believe in a God who can dance!