

Wisdom's Call
Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5:1-5
May 30, 2010

A young woman applied for a job as a farmhand. When asked for her qualifications, she said, "I can sleep when the wind blows." This puzzled the farmer, but he took a liking to the young woman and hired her. A few days later, the farmer and his wife were awakened in the night by a violent storm. They quickly began to check things out to see if all was secure. They found that the shutters of the farmhouse had been securely fastened. A good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace. The farm implements had been placed in the storage shed, safe from the elements. The tractor had been moved into the garage. The barn had been properly locked. All was well. Even the animals were calm. It was then that the farmer grasped the meaning of the young woman's words, "I can sleep when the wind blows." Because the farmhand had the wisdom to do her work well when the skies were clear, she was prepared for the storm when it broke. Consequently, when the wind blew, she had no fear. She was able to sleep in peace.

"Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? ... 'To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live.'" (Proverbs 8:1, 4) According to our reading today from the book of Proverbs, wisdom is the first entity that God created. "Wisdom doesn't settle down nor does it allow us to settle down. She leads us from one point to another in life [nudging us to] learn what we're supposed to learn, [nudging us to] do what we're supposed to do, [calling us to] become what we're supposed to become with who and what we are Wisdom leads, prods, and will pursue us..."¹

It is wisdom which says to us if you want to lose weight you must watch what you are eating and start exercising. It is wisdom which says if you are in debt so deep you do not know

¹ Joan Chittister. "Wisdom: A Gift or a Task?" Program 4108. November 23, 1996

how to get out of it to stop buying things you don't need, use coupons when shopping, and talk to someone who knows how to budget to help you restore your financial health. It is wisdom which says in any relationship we have in life there must be trust, respect, and honesty in the ways in which we communicate and interact with one another. While wisdom is from God, wisdom also comes at a cost. She is about truth, duty, and justice.²

Let us consider this: ¹ Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." ² And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me." ³ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron. ⁴ And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" (Exodus 32)

Aaron thought he was being wise in appeasing the people with a golden calf in lieu of saying "we need to pray for God's wisdom and guidance during this time." He wanted the people to like him so he sought to appease them rather than do the difficult task of truly leading them. He acted rashly in lieu of saying, "we need to act in faith and not in fear." Often times wisdom, as she calls out to us, is counterintuitive to what we want, much like the Israelites. While Aaron failed to lead, the Israelites failed to trust. They failed to trust that the God who brought them out of slavery, the God they witnessed parting the Red Sea, the God who had provided a safe place with food and water for them was still present with them. They wanted an easy fix just as we want easy fixes. They did not want to wait for their leader to lead them, nor the instructions

² Ibid

that were to come, they wanted answers and they wanted them now, much like us. It is wisdom that says not all questions come with an answer and if they do the answers will not always be easy and not all the fixes quick, nor should they be.

Wisdom calls us to know ourselves, to squeeze out of every moment in life whatever lessons it holds for us, whatever responses it demands at that time.³ She has been given to us in the midst of our suffering to help us persevere and endure those times in our lives individually and communally when we are unsure of what is happening, Wisdom is given to us to endure the birth pangs of new life and change. Those who had been called to follow Moses were granted the wisdom to follow him to free themselves from the slavery and injustices of Pharaoh. She called them to a new fuller and richer life. They had trusted that Moses was leading them to a better place because they trusted that God had called him to lead them and when the journey became difficult they seemed to have forgotten all this. Their quick fix was a spineless leader and a shiny god they could see and touch yet one that remained without substance. Now, when Moses returned I would say that he did not handle things all too well either by throwing down the tablets he had carried down the mountain nor in having the sons of Levi slay all the men who did not stand on the “Lord’s side.” That was his idea, God never instructed him to do that. But, wisdom led him back into the presence of God to ask for the forgiveness of the sins of the people and I would add hopefully for the sins he had committed.

Wisdom tells us “a house divided cannot stand.” Wisdom, in the story of Moses, the Israelite people, and many others, tells us that a stiff necked people who choose to go their own way cannot live fully into the promises of God. “We have to [in wisdom] choose which journey

³ Ibid

or path we are going to take as a people and a congregation and we must choose wisely, because the scary part is that God will honor our choice.”⁴ We must choose wisely.

“If we respond to the voice of wisdom around us and in us, we will then need to change, grow, develop, deepen, and come to new meanings, new learnings, new moments, new ways of being alive. Because something in our past challenged us and something in our present changed us and something within us still prods us toward whatever our unknown futures are. We’ll hold on to the past, of course, but each of us—if we’re really faithful to whatever our present is—will always step beyond it. ...Life is a process, not a place.”⁵

So, as people of faith what does this look like? When we choose to take our baptismal vows and our covenant of joining seriously it means that we are going to be intentional about our faith walk. That requires that we spend time with God in prayer not only sharing with God our joys and concerns, but earnestly seeking the will of God for our lives. It means listening for and to the still speaking voice of God. We are called to pray individually and as a community of faith. Anna Carter Florence said this, “You cannot tell anyone about God until you have told God about yourself.” Now, there will be no new revelations to God about who you are. Rather, this requires that we stop and look at ourselves acknowledging how we have lived into the promises of God and how we have failed. It is in doing this spiritual practice that we gain new insights into the power and presence of God in our lives and the paths that God has led us down and the paths that God is calling us too. We cannot tell anyone about God, until we have gone to God in prayer and told God about ourselves. We must know our own story and how God’s love, grace, and forgiveness have guided us. We must make peace with it.

We must also commit to reading, studying and meditating on scripture and other Holy Texts which speak of the work of God here on earth and God’s concern for us. If the gospel is

⁴ Rev. Craig Barnes

⁵ Chittister, *Ibid*

going to change us it must first be in us. Our power to share the good news of God's love comes from where we seek and meet Jesus everyday in our lives. Not only do we meet him in the gospel readings, but we also meet him when we are in relationship one with another. We find him in community.

We are the people of Peace United Church of Christ. We have been called to be open and affirming of all God's children, helping them to reach a place of health and wholeness. To do that we must strive for health and wholeness for ourselves. Wisdom says that in covenanting to be a member of this congregation we are making a covenant in the presence of God to be in service to God. We are all broken and wounded people but we cannot stay in our places of brokenness, woundedness, and pain even though in those places we are able to be in service to God. But to give God our best is to seek to follow wisdom, to seek to reach places of health. That is what we must offer to those who enter our doors with the expectation that this is what we will receive from them in return. The person that wisdom has guided and is guiding them to be.

Wisdom helps us to sleep when the wind blows. She tells us that there will be storms in our lives which foster perseverance, yet we must prepare for them during times of calm. Pray without ceasing, spend time in the scriptures, and be in relationship with one another and all of God's creation. Life is a process which places before us many choices. We must choose wisely because God will honor our choice. Wisdom says that we must take courage and seek to learn from the lessons of our past and be willing to change in our present so that we may move forward into whatever the future holds for us. Choose wisely... Amen