

The Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday, Year C
Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Canticle B, "A Song of Pilgrimage;" Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15
L. Hlass, St. Michael's Episcopal Church; 22 May 2016

Does not wisdom call? On the heights, across the way, at the crossroads; at the town entrance.
I say, If ever wisdom were to call and we were to hear and respond, surely that time is now!

I've been wondering about what the wisdom speakers, the prophets and sages of our day might be telling us about these crazy times in which we live, and what we could do to live out that wisdom in ways that can truly make a difference. Here's just a bit of what I've gleaned from a few of the wise voices of our time.

In speaking of our wisdom Proverb, Old Testament scholar, Walter Bruggemann says that the present political campaign in which we are enmeshed is in many ways an exhibit of foolishness that mocks wisdom. We hear a great deal of careless speech. We get assaults on the poor. We get illusions of technological fixes to relational problems, as though some technical solution can effectively assuage global warming that is grounded in unbridled greed. So much of the political campaign is conducted without attentiveness to any moral coherence, even though there is a great deal of cheap religious talk. It is as though there is a correlation between cheap religious talk and practical foolishness that does not understand that serious faith concerns the connectedness of all human beings and all creatures, so that society cannot be safely divided between the indifferent rich and the needy poor.

There is a strong strand of interpretation from this passage in a feminine direction. The Hebrew word for wisdom (hokmah) is feminine. Insofar as wisdom is about connectedness of all creatures in a moral coherence, then this feminine accent is especially useful and suggestive in our day. That we must cooperate and connect across ideological lines in a way that male macho posturing cannot do. In practice and in policy there has been a rich vein of foolishness that in turn gives way to greed and violence. But there are practical ways in which policy and conduct can be more fully brought into line with the claims of wisdom. Foolishness is alive and well among us, promising short term greedy solutions to big neighborly issues. But foolishness need not prevail. Wisdom came first.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/walter-brueggemann/on-wisdom-proverbs-81-4-22-31_b_9998964.html

New York Times columnist David Brooks believes that what we've seen in this election season (in terms of the huge support for anti-establishment candidates) is evidence of how much pain there is in the U.S. According to a [Pew Research poll](#), 75 percent of Trump voters say that life has gotten worse for people like them over the last half century. There are other sad social statistics: a record high in the suicide rate and a record low in social trust. Brooks believes that before we can get to better times we must connect with the pain, something that is not easy for those of us of comfortable economic means.

We'll probably need a new national story, one to replace the rags-to-riches story of the lone individual who pulls himself up by the bootstraps. That story isn't working for people anymore. Perhaps the new national story will be less individualistic and more redemptive. Maybe it will be a story about communities that heal those who suffer from addiction, broken homes, trauma, prison and loss, a story of those who triumph over the isolation, social instability and dislocation so common today.

We'll also need to rebuild the sense that we're all in this together; a sort of communitarianism. Maybe the task is to build a ladder of hope. People across America have been falling through the cracks. Their children are adrift. We can start at the personal level just by hearing them talk — having a conversation.

Then at the community level we can listen to those already helping. James Fallows had a story in The Atlantic Monthly noting that while we're dysfunctional at the national level there are local renaissances dotted across the country. To the question, "Who makes this town go?" Fallows found local patriots creating radical schools, arts festivals, public-private partnerships that meet community needs.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/29/opinion/if-not-trump-what.html>

Journalist and educator Richard Heinburg describes the crazy times we're in in terms of resilience theory: that we are entering what's called the "release" phase of a cycle that characterizes all systemic development, a phase that is "a rapid, chaotic period during which capitals (natural, human, social, built and financial) tend to be lost and novelty can succeed." This will feel to those undergoing it a lot less like "release" than "pure hell."

Among the possible outcomes: Government-funded safety nets become unaffordable and are abandoned. Public infrastructure decays. Economic systems, transport systems, political systems, health care systems and food systems become inoperable to varying degrees. Global military hegemony becomes more difficult to maintain, and international conflict becomes more likely. Any of these outcomes increases our individual vulnerability. Everyone is imperiled, especially those who are poor, old, sick or disabled.

The worst of ruthless competition is likely to occur in the early stage of the release phase, when power holders try to keep together what wants to fall apart and reorganize. The effort to hang on to what we have in the face of uncertainty and fear may bring out the competitive nature in many of us, but once we're in the midst of actual crisis we could be more likely to band together.

In this chaotic release phase there's great potential for violence, because it can feel so insecure. It's no wonder that so many who sense the precariousness of our current situation have opted to become preppers and survivalists. But things will go a lot better for us if, rather than stocking up on guns and canned goods, we spend our time getting to know our neighbors, learning how to facilitate effective meetings, or helping design resilient local food systems. Survival will depend on finding cooperative paths in which sacrifice is shared, the best of our collective achievements are preserved, and compassion is nurtured.

<http://richardheinberg.com/museletter-242-our-cooperative-darwinian-moment>

According to Franciscan priest, teacher and author Richard Rohr, the template of all reality is Trinity. "Let *us* create [humanity] in our own image," the creation story says (Genesis 1:26). God is essentially shared life, life in relationship. In the beginning is relationship, we might say. Within the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit perfectly love and are perfectly loved. We come to know who God is through exchanges of mutual knowing and loving.

God's basic method of communicating God's self is not the "saved" individual, the rightly informed believer, or even personal careers in ministry, but the journey and bonding process that God initiates in community that is seeking to participate in God's love, maybe without even consciously knowing it. There is no other form for the Christian life except a common one.

(Richard Rohr's Meditation: *The Body of Christ*; Center for Contemplation and Action, 17 April 2016)

Did you pick up any common threads running through these sage pieces: words like relationship, community, creativity, cooperation, connecting with people's pain. Sounds a lot like the Gospel message, and it seems to me where Wisdom and the Spirit of Truth have been leading us for some time. Let's keep paying attention.