

## **Weekly Reading – Monday, May 24, 2010**

### **Proverbs 8: 1-4, 22-31**

Wisdom is standing in the public square and she has something to say. She is at the crossroads where different paths meet. She is right at the entrance to the city. It's as if she wants to make sure she doesn't miss anyone. You see, this message that she has is not just for a chosen few. It is not secret knowledge that needs special de-coding skills. What she has to say is for all people, for "all that live." And her words sparkle with freshness, harkening us back to the beginning of all creation, calling us into the delightful newness of that first day.

It is Wisdom who speaks; Wisdom, the first-born of all creation. God created her first, before anything else was breathed into life. She reminds us of that. She reminds us that she, Wisdom, was there when everything was birthed. She was witness to it all. Wisdom is present and intimately connected with every part of creation. Wisdom is woven into the fabric of all that is. That is something worthy to ponder for a while.

There is something else Wisdom has to tell us. Not only was she present when all else was created, she also joined the Creator in rejoicing over and delighting in the inhabited world, in the whole human race. See if you can picture that in your mind: Wisdom and the Creator taking delight in creation. The first response to creation was not judgment; it was not despair. It was playful delight. You know, God didn't have to create anything. Creation is an act of absolute freedom on God's part, for the sole purpose of delight. Now that truly is something to ponder for a while.

On beautiful spring mornings, when the world seems almost new again, it is good to be reminded of such divine delight. Thanks, Wisdom.

### **Romans 5: 1-5**

With Paul, everything always starts with givens: givens in the sense of that which is, from which everything else flows; givens in the sense of being a gift. That's clear in this week's reading from Romans. We start with the given: God has acted in Christ in order to set us back in right relationship with God. We don't have to do anything to accomplish such an impossible feat. God has already done it for us. All we have to do is open ourselves in trust to that good news. That's the given.

It is pure gift. And what flows from this gift is really quite wonderful. Once the truth of God's saving love seeps into our bones, everything in life shifts. We no longer have to worry. We no longer have to cower, wondering when the hand of judgment will strike. We no longer have to try to prove ourselves to God or anyone else. We are at peace with God now.

So, that means we can hold our heads high, not because of anything we've done, but because God has once again chosen to act in absolute freedom powered by Her love and delight for us. God didn't have to do anything to bring us back home. But God chose to do it because once again God's desire and love for us claim the day, just like in creation.

Once we trust that this is the case, how we approach life radically changes. We can approach every moment with joy. We can enter each moment with a confidence, not in ourselves, but in God-with-us. It doesn't mean that suffering and pain will vanish. But when it comes, we can enter it without being overwhelmed by it because we know God can be at work even in the worst of times evoking endurance that builds character and ultimately leads us to hope.

Why can we approach even suffering as a source of hope? It's because we don't just start with givens, we are surrounded by them. Paul might have started this passage with one given. He ends it with another. He reminds us that the Holy Spirit has been given to us, is active in us, is even pouring God's love into our hearts. God's gifts never end!

We not only begin with gift; we are surrounded by gift. Now that's amazing grace!

### **John 16: 12-15**

There are days when I wish I had lived in Jesus' day. It would have been so great to actually see him face to face, to watch him in action, to feel the power of love emanate from him. I have to confess that some days I just simply feel short-changed by the fact that I was born thousands of years too late. I feel cheated. Oh, sure, we have the Holy Spirit, but She's not Jesus, after all.

Jesus has a few words for folks like me. They are compassionate and assuring words. They also are corrective words.

Jesus is soon to be arrested and crucified. He knows that. He knows the path ahead will be hard on his disciples. He knows they will imagine they have been abandoned. So he reassures them that they will not be alone. When he is gone, the Holy Spirit will be sent to them. They will have a guide, one who will speak what they need to hear when they are able to bear it. They will not be left desolate, but will have company along the way, one who will reveal divine truth to them.

And here's the clincher: that Spirit is not some second-class citizen. At least that's what Jesus says. What that Father has flows to the Son; and what the Son has flows through the Spirit to us. There is no short-changing going on at all. The full gifts of God flow our way too.

I stand corrected. I sing for joy.