

SEPTEMBER

“Encounters with Wisdom” by Deaconess Katrina Martich

Hymn Suggestion

“Touch the Earth Lightly” (ELW #739) or “All You Works of God, Bless the Lord” (LSB #930)

Scripture

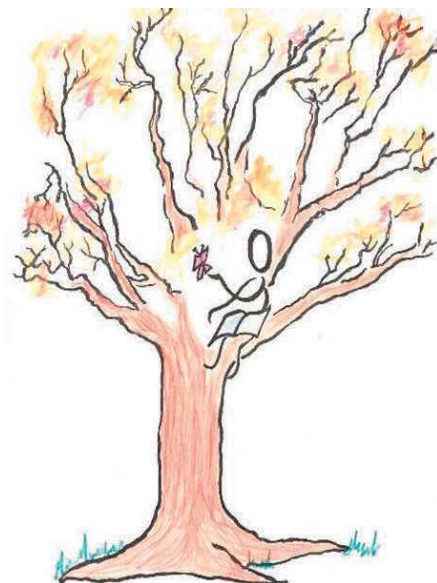
“When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.” Proverbs 8:27-31

Devotion

The more I've seen, the more I've rediscovered what I knew as a child.

I spent much of my childhood playing outdoors. On Summer days I laid in the grass and imagined creatures in the clouds. In Autumn I pulled apart birch tree seed and cattail pods to laugh with joy as the wind took them away. Winter meant playing in the snow and watching birds at Mom's feeders. Spring brought the excitement of seeing the first patch of grass through the melting snow. When life got difficult, my escape was sitting in a maple tree and observing the world. If I really needed to get away, I explored the abandoned farmland behind our house.

As I engaged the natural world with wonder, I encountered Wisdom, the feminine Sophia. In Proverbs 8:27 we hear she is present with God and active in creation from “when he established the heavens.” Depending on the translation, Wisdom is the “master worker” (Proverbs 8:30), God's helper in creation, or at play in creation with child-like delight. Either way, she is active and fully engaged with both Creator and creation. When outside, I learned my well-being depended on understanding and adapting to her ways.



As I grew older, the demands of school and life limited the time I spent outside. My love of nature turned into courses studied in school. First there, and then in my early years as a water resources engineer, I was taught the ways of civilization and the ethos of “conquering” the land for our benefit. Knowledge and technology meant we could put water where we wanted it. We could live and generate wealth from land that used to flood, and we could live and farm in areas that used to be too dry for large-scale habitation.

Eventually, I returned to spending time outside. As I once again delighted in the natural world, I started to notice the conflict between the ways I was taught and the ways of Wisdom. Knowledge and technology without Wisdom yielded quick benefits for some, but long-term harm for many. Ecosystems were destroyed. I saw people in peril when projects enticed them to live in places with insufficient, long-term supplies of water or on land prone to flooding. Droughts and storms revealed the limits of projects.

My well-being on this planet depends on understanding and adapting to the ways of Wisdom. It starts by walking humbly within creation, acknowledging that it belongs to the Creator, not me, and is intended for more than just my benefit. Walking humbly means noticing and delighting in creation with child-like wonder, so that I might see Wisdom at work within it and come alongside her cooperatively with knowledge and technology, instead of fighting her for dominance.

With this newly found humility, I changed jobs and started working on holistic watershed projects. These consider how we might conserve, adapt to, and restore natural waterways for the flourishing of all life, while also providing drinking water and flood protection for people. I’ve learned to delight in Wisdom’s ways in my own backyard, where I look for and nurture native plants that sprout naturally, instead of pulling them as weeds.

Each day is now a continuing journey of acknowledging the limits of my ways and learning to walk humbly within creation. I’ve discovered each step is an act of justice, drawing me closer to right relationship with God my creator and all inhabitants of God’s creation. It’s a journey that leads to “rejoicing in this inhabited world and delighting in the human race” (Proverbs 8:31).

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

- How do you delight in creation and encounter Wisdom within it?
- What step might you take to walk more humbly within creation?

Prayer

God our Creator, source of all life, open my eyes to see the way of Wisdom in your creation and delight in it as you do. Amen

About the Author

Katrina Martich is a deaconess and a professional engineer in Texas. Read more by her at www.katrinamartich.com or by following her on Facebook.