

PROVERBS 8: 22-36

- ²² God created me at the beginning of God's work,
the first of God's acts of long ago.
- ²³ Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
- ²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
- ²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—
- ²⁶ when God had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
- ²⁷ When God established the heavens, I was there,
when God drew a circle on the face of the deep,
- ²⁸ when God made firm the skies above,
when God established the fountains of the deep,
- ²⁹ when God assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress God's command,
when God marked out the foundations of the earth,
- ³⁰ then I was beside God, like a master worker;
and I was daily God's delight,
rejoicing before God always,
- ³¹ rejoicing in God's inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.
- ³² 'And now, my children, listen to me:
happy are those who keep my ways.
- ³³ Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
- ³⁴ Happy is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
- ³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favour from God;
- ³⁶ but those who miss me injure themselves;
all who hate me love death.'

This is one of the most fascinating passages in all of scripture. Many commentaries have been written on this passage by Jewish and Christian theologians, bible scholars and mystics. The gospel of John and ancient Jewish scholar Philo of Alexandria both write about the "Word" of God in creation. But this passage speaks of the Wisdom of God in creation. And Christians have thought of it all as a kind of Trinity: God the Creator and Abba, Christ the Word of God made flesh, and the Holy Spirit - the Wisdom of God as breath and wind blowing and flowing through the universe... This is also one of the reasons ancient theologians imaged the Holy

Spirit as the feminine side of God given wisdom is addressed as female in this book. Isn't all this fascinating?

But what does this passage say more specifically? It says that God's act of creation begins with wisdom. Wisdom is the first act because it is through wisdom and with wisdom that God creates all else in the universe. This also means that all that is created is the product of divine wisdom spoken into being and therefore also thought creatively into being out of the depths of God's own being. Isn't this wonderful? To think of ourselves, the ground beneath our feet, the trees we behold every day, the animals and birds, all of it coming to be through God's speaking it all to be and thinking it all to be – Creator, Word and Wisdom; isn't this marvelous?

And more than this, these verses also tell us that we should delight in wisdom and in the creation that has come to be through wisdom just as God delights in it all. "I (wisdom) was daily God's delight, rejoicing before God always, rejoicing in God's inhabited world and delighting in the human race." (30-31) Imagine that, wisdom delights in creation and the creation of our humanity too. Despite all that may give us cause to feel inadequate or unworthy, or given the state of our planet as failed stewards and partners of our mother earth, wisdom yet delights in our coming to be. She sees what it is in us yet to become... We are worth our Abba Creator's ongoing investment... Isn't this encouraging to say the least?!

But there's more... verse 32 onwards addresses us readers and students of wisdom more personally: "And now, my children, listen to me: happy are those who keep my ways... Happy is the one who listens to me... for whoever finds me finds life... but those who miss me injure themselves; all who hate me love death." It's not enough that we are the product of the rich creativity of divine wisdom, and it's not enough that we may delight in all this. We must pursue wisdom and live by it otherwise we will harm ourselves and contribute to the harm of our mother earth and each other. How are you pursuing divine wisdom in your living, loving, learning and practicing?

PRAYER: Find us, O God, Creator and Abba... Walk with us and shine your light for our way forward O Word made flesh... Move through us and keep transforming us O Spirit Wisdom... Help us discern better from worse, right from wrong, and give us the courage and the faith to choose your way despite our temptations and our fears... Amen.