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**“At the Crossroads”**  
A sermon by Marilyn T. Hedgpeth

**Trinity Sunday (Year C)**  
**May 22, 2016**  
Proverbs 8:1–4, 22–31; John 16:12–15; 1 Corinthians 1:17–25

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At the crossroads, Wisdom takes her stand, the writer of Proverbs says.

At the crossroads, Wisdom cries out *to you*, O people, to ALL who live.

At the crossroads, at the entrance, at the gate, at the threshold,  
as it was in the beginning, is, and ever shall be.

Wisdom beckons, Wisdom invites, Wisdom coaxes and cajoles,  
*Wisdom offers God's blessing.*

In the Old Testament, to my way of thinking, the Triune God seems  
to be manifested in the form of Creating God, Hovering Spirit,  
and Life-giving Wisdom, who was with God before the world began  
as Co-Creator at God's side.

Once upon a time, early in our marriage, when my husband and I were much younger,  
on the threshold of buying our first house, a for-sale-by-owner,  
Wisdom called out to us.

The three bedroom fixer-upper had tiny closets, although they were cedar lined.  
It had a portable dishwasher on caster wheels that rolled to the sink  
and connected via hose to the faucet, which could be dangerous.

The flat back yard, lying at the base of a hill, was prone to flooding.  
But it also had the prime factor of location, location, location.

Nevertheless, my husband, a mainframe computer salesman at the time,  
thought he could negotiate a bargain for us.  
And so, at the crossroads of weighing the assets verses the liabilities of the house,  
of offering and counteroffering, of buying and selling,  
Hedge decided to bid low, stand his ground, and coerce the seller  
to bend to our terms.  
He had his heels dug in deep in that anxious crisscross  
of phone calls, and negotiations.  
And he probably would have stayed there  
and we probably would have ended up houseless  
had not Wisdom at that conjunction beckoned, invited, coaxed and cajoled  
not so subtly or politely through the voice of the elderly seller's daughter  
who called out to my husband, point blank: "Don't be dumb, Hedge!"  
It made us so mad! She said it once, and she said it again: "Don't be dumb, Hedge!"  
Startling and rude, yes; nevertheless, she *was* the voice of Wisdom that day,  
offering us God's blessing of a home,  
where we eventually would live for five wonderful years,  
acquire our first little black dog, plant a morning glory trellis,  
have our first two children, and hang a swing from the willow oak in the backyard.  
I am forever grateful to that voice of God's Wisdom inviting us into a future  
designed for our happiness and blessing, unbeknownst to us at that time.  
Because Wisdom was with God at the first, before the beginning of the earth,  
before the mountains, before the hills, Wisdom has a sense of history,  
a sense of the big picture, and a long view of the arc of the universe.

At the crossroads, Wisdom cries out to you, O people, in order that you might live.  
The British rock guitarist, Eric Clapton, recorded a song entitled *Crossroads*,  
which is human lament and blues at its best.

The lyrics say: *I went down to the crossroads, fell down on my knees.*  
*Down to the crossroads, fell down on my knees.*

*Asked the Lord above for mercy, 'Save me, if you please.'*  
*I went down to the crossroads, tried to flag a ride.*  
*Down to the crossroads, tried to flag a ride.*  
*Nobody seemed to know me. Everybody passed my eye...*

(Clapton, and Cream, the group who recorded the song, credit the author as Robert Johnson, who wrote the song in the 1930s.)

It is a lament as true and perfect as any biblical lament of the psalmists.  
It is the cry of every human being who finds himself or herself faltering,  
hesitating, at a point of grace, that could be either life denying or life giving.  
It is the cry of every human being who finds himself or herself cut off, alone,  
trying to flag a ride, unrecognized as in distress by every human being,  
who wave in passing as they continue down the road.  
It is to *this* human being in all of us that Wisdom has cried out  
since the beginning of time, beckoning, inviting, coaxing and cajoling,  
offering God's blessing of life and joy, at times of great need and despair.

When I was studying this passage from Proverbs,  
I could not help but think about one of our former members, Leigh Knauert,  
whose husband, David, was a brilliant Old Testament scholar  
with a Ph.D. in Wisdom Literature.

David, Leigh, and their four young children were training for the mission field,  
preparing to move to a post in Brazil, when David suffered a cardiac arrest  
while jogging one morning in Atlanta, in November 2009.

He was only 38 years old.

The funeral service for David was held here at First Presbyterian Church  
with Walter Brueggemann preaching for one of his most prized pupils.

And were that not tragic enough, three years later, their oldest son, Peter,  
took his own life in a fit of anger or grief, or both, at age 14.

At that point, Leigh, the young widow; Leigh, the young mother,  
clearly stood at a crossroads.

Joe Harvard and I flew to Denver to take part in the funeral of their son, Peter.

Deborah Momsen-Hudson, Mark Higgins, and others were there, too,  
to support Leigh at what must have been her darkest days.

*And yet, I will never, ever, forget the brave mother who stood to speak  
at her own son's funeral, nor can I forget what she chose to say:*

"I have two choices in front of me, as Deuteronomy 30:19 says,

*"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today  
that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.  
Choose life so that you and your descendents may live."*

This choice is one we are faced with over and over every day," Leigh said.

"It is difficult, especially when we have so many voices

coaxing us away from the choice we know *will bring life*.

The forces of evil want to pull us toward death,

both literal death and paths that lead toward eventual destruction.

Hundreds of you," she continued, "from my close friends to those with whom

I am loosely connected, have been amazing examples to me of choosing life.

You choose life when you fly across the country

to be by my side and give me a hug.

You choose life when you bring my family a meal,

allowing me one less dinner to think about.

You choose life when you spend time with my children

and provide ways of caring for myself that go far beyond my basic needs.

You choose life when you give and give and give to me.

Some of the acts of generosity are so huge.

So, how can I make any other choice other than that

which has been so beautifully modeled for me?

I would literally have to bury my head in a hole

to not be blinded by the light of God's love

that so many of you have allowed to shine through yourselves."

(Brueggemann, Walter and Knauert, Leigh. "At the Death of Peter Knauert: Peter Amid Remembering and Hoping." *Journal for Preaching*, Easter, 2013)

To my way of thinking, that was the voice of Wisdom calling out to Leigh,  
or perhaps it was her husband, David, channeling the voice of Wisdom  
that he studied and loved so well, to Leigh and their family  
at that crossroads of death and despair.

The Apostle Paul makes the case in 1 Corinthians 1 that the Wisdom of God  
has now been embodied as Christ crucified, the recreating power of God,  
which looks utterly foolish to the secular world.

Paul describes Christ, the Crucified One, as Wisdom Incarnate:  
the same One who is personified as Wisdom in Proverbs,  
the same One present as Co-Creator with God at Creation,  
the same One present at the crucifixion on Calvary,  
the same One present since time immemorial as giver of hugs,  
as bringer of meals, as friend to children, as provider of care;  
the same One embodied and incarnated as self-emptying love,  
as self-expending love, that gives and gives and gives  
as binder-up of the broken-hearted, as advocate of LIFE BEYOND DEATH,  
and JOY BEYOND DESPAIR.

The true nature of God's inner being is certainly a mystery to us.  
Sometimes God reveals God's self as Creator, as Hovering Spirit,  
and as Life giving Wisdom.

And at other times, God reveals God's self as doting Father, as beloved Son, and as  
Holy Spirit/Advocate/Comforter.

The true essence of God's inner being is something we see as through a mirror dimly.  
It is beyond our knowing or our understanding.

*It makes us all appear dumb, if we are honest with ourselves.*

Scottish scholar James Mackey says that Trinitarian theology

*makes agnostics of us all* because we cannot know

the nature of God's inner being until that is finally revealed to us,  
and even then, only to the degree that we can receive it in glory.

(Mackey, James. "The Preacher, The Theologian, and the Trinity". *Theology Today*.  
October 1997, p. 366.)

But what we can fathom, he says, is our knowledge of the "economic Trinity,  
of God's continued loving *activity* in creation from origin to eschaton"

(Mackey, James. p. 365),

not necessarily what God is, in essence, but what God does, in action,  
and how that helps us relate to each other

at the crossroads of life, where difficult choices are required of us.

"All knowledge we may now have of God," Mackey says, "comes from *the living*  
of the Christian life, the life that is of Christ in us, *lived as best we may*

in the light that shines on our path from the Spirit of God and of Christ."

(Mackey, James. p. 349)

At the crossroads of President Obama's leadership and the next President's leadership,

Wisdom cries out to our *nation*;

At the crossroads of gender equity and gender persecution,

Wisdom cries out to our *state*;

At the crossroads of gentrification and affordable housing,

at the crossroads of an uptick in violent crime and a new police chief, Cerelyn Davis,

Wisdom cries out to our *city*;

At the crossroads of Joe's ministry and Mindy's ministry,

Wisdom cries out to our *church*;

At the crossroads of our personal dilemmas, traumas and turning points,

Wisdom calls out to each of us, to ALL who live.

Sometimes the voice of Wisdom speaks profoundly through prophets,

like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who is credited with so wisely stating that

“the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”

And sometimes the voice of Wisdom cuts to the chase with her insight,

succinctly saying, “Don’t be dumb!” or “Choose life!”

Are we listening for her voice, and are we heeding her call

in ways that affirm ALL life, and that model the self emptying

and abundantly giving love of Christ?

How have you heard her call out to you at the turning points in your life?

At the crossroads of the life denying and the life giving, the long, patient, loving

and self giving work of the Triune God continues to beckon and invite,

coax and cajole on behalf of ALL those in whom God delights. Amen.