



The Chimes

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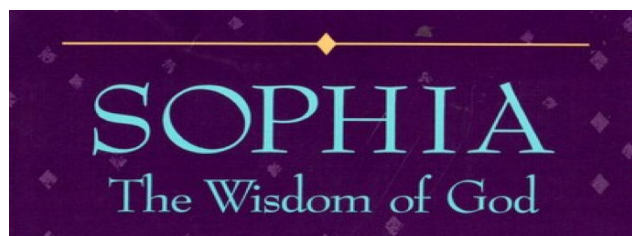
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Ministers: Every Member of the Congregation

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.



By Anna-Martha Hazen, Sermon 5/12/19

(Edited for length)

Scriptures: Wisdom 7:24-27; New Jerusalem Bible; Acts 9: 36-43; NRSV

The first scripture passage is from the Book of Wisdom (which is also known as the Wisdom of Solomon), and it is not in your pew Bible. It's part of the apocrypha, which is a group of Jewish writings from between Old and New Testament times that are included in Catholic versions of the Bible, but not in most Protestant ones. The Book of Wisdom comes out of the Jewish wisdom tradition, and some other writings from that tradition did make it into the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament - including Proverbs, Song of Songs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, but the Book of Wisdom did not, mainly because it was written later, and in Greek. So it's not in our version of the Bible, but I think it's still worth reading!

One of the unique things about of the Book of Wisdom and some other wisdom literature, is that wisdom, or Sophia in Greek, is described as a feminine aspect of the divine.

We heard wisdom described in the reading this morning as "a reflection of the eternal light" "mirror of God's active power...image of divine goodness."

Do you remember in the first chapter of Genesis, how as God creates the world, each part of creation is declared GOOD? God creates, and says it is good, and then finally, "it is very good." One of the ways of describing that initial, but also continual, eternal outpouring of God's goodness into all of creation, is as wisdom or Sophia. As a reflection of the eternal light, she embodies God's goodness present and flowing through each of us. She calls us to remember our original goodness, and to live out that knowing.

The Book of Wisdom was written not long before Jesus' birth, and it's thought to have been important to early Christians. In this tradition, the way of knowing God is not through laws and hierarchy, but through personal and communal experience of the divine, and teachings are passed down through parables, proverbs, and questions which challenge the listener to seek the spark of wisdom already inherent in their lives and in the physical world around them.

Of course, seeing the spark of wisdom, or the original goodness, in every thing in creation is a lot easier in theory than in reality.

I mean, when my girls go to sleep each night, I think they are the most precious, perfect beings on the planet, but when they wake up at 2 am, they're not so perfect anymore.

Wisdom is this untarnished mirror, reflecting God's goodness in each of us, but that reflection gets blocked by a million things - tiredness, busy-ness, power, status, fears... there are a million things that get in the way of seeing that reflection of goodness within us. So it's important that we take the time to ask ourselves - when do you feel connected to the original goodness in yourself and in others? How do you honor the reflection of the divine when you see it? And what are the obstacles that stand between you and that reflection as you live out your day?

I think that Tabitha, from the story in Acts, can teach us something about recognizing the original goodness in ourselves and others. Tabitha is the only female disciple officially recognized in the New Testament as we know it. At least, this story in Acts is the only place the feminine form of the word disciple is used in Greek. So we know right off the bat that she challenged existing social and religious constrictions around who can reflect God in the world and how they do so. She must have paid enough attention to the stirrings of her heart to know and trust the divine light in herself, despite living in a time that would not have been really supportive of that.

We are introduced to Tabitha by both her Aramaic name, Tabitha, and Greek name, Dorcas, which suggests that she or at least her story, transcended linguistic and cultural divides.

She was part of a community which dared to listen for God's voice even in different languages and traditions.

We also hear about the clothing Tabitha made for the widows who surrounded her body, weeping, after she died. Their emotion, and devotion to her as they gather in her room make me think they weren't just there for a new tunic to show off to a neighbor, but because Tabitha had helped them re-discover something central about themselves; a sense of dignity and inherent worth, which layers of poverty, grief and marginalization would have hidden all too well.

We don't know much about Tabitha's life story, but she strikes me as someone who was in touch with wisdom. And there is another woman, one similarly loving and fierce, whose story I would like to share with you. Her name was Rachel Held Evans, and she died last Saturday, at the age of 37. She was an author and speaker, a leader in progressive Christianity especially among millennials. She, like Tabitha, listened for the deep and sometimes disruptive voice of wisdom, and followed it relentlessly.

RHE, as she was known online, grew up immersed in conservative evangelical Christianity, and while she loved that community, over time she found that seeking the divine and remaining true to her deepest self, meant leaving it. Like Tabitha she owned and honored her own voice, heart and mind, and she became a leader despite being told she could not because of her gender.

Just as Tabitha realized and provided what marginalized women in her community needed in order to be returned to their core identity as God's beloved, so too Rachel did that for those hurt by and disillusioned with their experience of Christianity.

Through her work she opened the door for thousands of others to re-discover a faith that valued their whole being, and to re-imagine what a truly inclusive and diverse church looks and acts like.

And like in Tabitha's story, at word of her death, people wept. At Tabitha's bedside the widows held up the tunics she had sewn. RHE's mourners created a social media tidal wave of #becauseofRHE, to share how she changed their lives. But unfortunately, the stories of Tabitha and Rachel diverge. As RHE lay in a coma, leaders of progressive Christianity, like Nadia Bolz Weber and Jeff Chu gathered at her bedside, anointed her, prayed for healing. But she did not wake up.

I find myself caught between not really believing that Peter literally brought Tabitha back to life, or if that did happen, not understanding how, but at the same time if that did somehow happen for Tabitha, wanting to know why it couldn't also happen for Rachel Held Evans.

And you know, I think RHE would be completely supportive of asking those questions in church. Like Richard Rohr who says that the opposite of faith is not doubt, but fear, RHE talked about making friends with doubt and difficult questions. In her version of church, there was room for anger, disappointment, and confusion about God and scripture. And by there being room for these things, I mean a place of value, because those places where the heart and mind grapple with big questions are the very places that lead us closer to our center, to what is real and true and good within us, where we uncover bit by bit, a reflection of the divine.

RHE wrote: "We want to bring our whole selves through the church doors, without leaving our hearts and minds behind, without wearing a mask." "sometimes we are closer to the truth" she said "in our vulnerability than in our safe certainties."

RHE's writing reminds me that luckily, perfection is not a requirement for speaking in church. In fact, she said that church should be more like an AA meeting and less like a country club. Perfection is not even the goal, wholeness is.

The Book of Wisdom says that Sophia "leads us by a marvelous road. She herself our shelter by day and our starlight through the night." We are not promised that the road will be clear, straight, or reasonably level. We are going to need that shelter, when the days are sweltering and we are exhausted. And when the sun goes down and we have no idea where we are going, we will need that starlight. The road will not be easy but it will be full of marvels.

Rachel Held Evans and Tabitha, they both show us what it looks like to follow the call of Wisdom, headlong through the obstacles and down to the heart of things, where we find the reflection of God alive in us, in our neighbor, and in the world around us. Another passage about Wisdom reads "go after her and seek her: she will reveal herself to you; once you hold her, do not let her go. For in the end you will find rest in her and she will take the form of joy in you." So watch, my friends, for the breath of the spirit moving through your life, and hold on when you find it. Remember, we are all beloved, light carriers, reflection bearers, made of and for goodness. Thanks be to God. Amen

Invitations to Worship

Sunday, May 26

Is the 2000-year-old Christian religion able to create "New Life" today? Using Matthew 9:9-13 and Acts 1:13-26 Felton Daniels will bring the message entitled "New Life, Are You Feeling It?" Well, are you? New pastor, new ideas, new challenges. Let's all "get on board" as we continue to move forward.

Sunday, June 2

"I Desire" from Acts 16:16-34, Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17:20-26 Jesus offers a longing prayer at the Last Supper that the world will experience union with the glorified Jesus. Stephen Reddy will bring the message.



May 26 Libby Higgs

June 2



Alba Ver Hulst
May 31, 2018

"What we have once enjoyed we can never lose".
Anonymous

Hold in the Light

May 12:

Pat Royer had her grandson and family here for Mother's Day. She also reported that Dan Galt had his last chemo treatment and is feeling optimistic.

Lynda Sesser reports that Bob hurt his back.

Anita Pederson-Pennock has achieved tenure at California State University Stanislaus. She asks for prayers for her father as he is responding to medication for his lung cancer. She reports that there are 2 new babies in her family.

Evan Campbell asks for prayer for Jaimie's brother who was in ICU but is home now.

Gayle Hernandez visited her home church in Iowa and is concerned that it is struggling to keep going.

May 19

Jolinda Reddy shared the joy of Stephen's 51st anniversary of his ordination.

Kim Boardman shared two joys: Kyle's girlfriend's graduation from Cal Poly and Kyle getting his Special Education credential.

Anne Marie Washington's husband Ed was at worship and feeling well after elbow surgery.

Larry Cole is dealing with severe pain in his back and is waiting for an MRI to determine the cause.

Keep in your prayers all those who are shut in; those who are ill; and those whose joys or concerns are too deep for words.

Deacon on Call
For May: Lynda Sæsser
For June: Eddie Hernandez

Items of Note



I don't know where to begin with the Thank You's for our Mothers and Friends Tea this past Saturday.

First, to my awesome commission who worked very hard to make this happen. Much of it couldn't be done until the last minute and Saturday was a full day for them but we pulled it off.

Thanks to our gentleman servers who took care of you all, Felton, Eddie, Eddie's friend Eddie, Kyler, who is Sandy Whitby's grandson, and Davy.

To my hubby who took charge of the kitchen like always, there to help even though he is not on the commission.

Maddy, who took care of sound for us.
To all of you who attended and brought others to be with us. I think over half of our attendance were not part of our congregation, so we got a lot of exposure.
Again a big Thank You. ~Sue



This Wednesday is the Fourth Wednesday, so Faith Bites will be a potluck!

This Wednesday is also the last Faith Bites of the season, before we begin Summer Potlucks.

Summer potlucks are held twice a month, on the second and fourth Wednesdays. We will have food themes again this year.

Here is the schedule.

6/12 Picnic Food: We will provide some hamburgers and hot dogs with all the fixings.

6/26 will be Mexican night

7/10 Christmas in July

7/24 Chinese

8/7 We will have our annual Birthday Event
Jack the Magician will be here for that event.

8/21 Vegetarian/Vegan

Last year after dinner I just threw out a question and let everyone share. If you have a question you'd like to hear answers for, let me know.

Please come join us. ~Fellowship & Recreation

Special Council Meeting: June 9th

We will meet directly following worship to consider the recommendation from the Board to separate the Treasurer/Bookkeeper position into two positions. This would provide two sets of eyes on all the financial transactions of the Church.

The Treasurer would be an ex-officio, elected member of the Board and the Stewardship Commission. The Treasurer would sign checks, and report all financial transactions to the Board and Council.

The Bookkeeper would be a paid position and keep a book of accounts, receive the financial secretary's deposit slips, disburse funds by preparing checks for the Treasurer's signature, make written reports of all financial transactions and submit accounts to an annual audit.

Fathers' Day Bash-June 15th Time Change!

We think in June it might be too hot for the activities we have planned, so we have changed the time to 11am for your comfort. Gary (my son-in-law) will be our barbecue man. He also is a professional Dutch Oven cook who will do a demonstration that will be dessert, which I heard is berry cobbler. There is also talk of homemade ice cream. Plan to come join us Saturday, June 15th at 11am for lots of fun and good food. ~Fellowship & Recreation

Household Items Needed for Waterford Parsonage

Beginning this summer, Pacific Southwest District will be supporting the work to build a new Spanish-speaking congregation in the former Waterford COB building. Our planting pastor and her family will be moving to the parsonage soon. They do not have many belongings and they need many items:

Washer and electric dryer
Lawnmower
Dining/kitchen table and chairs
Dressers
Couch
Chairs
Coffee table

If you have items to share please contact Joel Price at (209) 204-1956 or Russ Matteson at 909-406-5370. We are ready to accept items now.
(P.S. Luella has offered a loveseat and coffee table and is waiting to hear if they are accepted.)

Calling All Women -
Camp Peaceful Pines
Women's Retreat is
coming up on **June 21-23** and we think it's



going to be a great weekend. The resource leader will be Mary McDonald of Davis, CA. Mary graduated from Stanford University, has a Ph.D. in developmental psychology from the University of Washington and completed a post-doc at UCLA's Neuropsychiatric Institute.

With a husband who was a pediatrician and four beautiful children, her "good" Christian life was unfolding as she had planned... until a series of life struggles pushed her deeper and deeper into the heart of God. Currently, she is a leader for the Oasis small groups at University Covenant church (UCC) and is part of the prayer team at UCC.

So, mark your calendars to save these dates for another amazing, meaningful weekend at Camp for women of all ages. We will share stories, study scripture, enjoy great wilderness, and eat extremely well. If you're interested, go to the Peaceful Pines website, www.camppeacefulpines.org, where you'll find all the information, including registration forms. Or call Lynda Sesser, Camp Registrar, at 209-527-8613.



**LET'S GO CAMPING...at
Camp Peaceful Pines!!**

There is a camp just right for you in the beautiful high Sierra Nevada Mountains at Camp Peaceful Pines! We offer a variety of camping experiences in our rustic but comfortable style of camping for all ages... and best of all, 3 wonderful meals a day provided by our excellent cooks in the cozy Dining Hall.

A Women's Retreat Weekend June 21-23

See the previous Chimes article for details of the leadership of the Women's Retreat.

There will also be crafts, recreation, singing & opportunities for meaningful conversation throughout the weekend

We have 2 options for families - ***Family Camp July 26-30th*** features Robert Aguirre,

Resource Leader for am sessions & campfires.

There are afternoon crafts & organized recreation, plus a hike day /day away. At

Discovery Camp June 30-July 5 Joe Vecchio will provide leadership at campfires, with more informal recreation opportunities at camp or away. Creativity abounds with quilting projects in the dining hall.

Junior / Junior High / Youth Camp July 21-

26 is just for youngsters completing 4th through 12th grades. Although campers spend much of their time together, they are separated by grade level in cabins and for other group sessions. Garry & Karen Pierson return as Resource Leaders for discussion groups. There are organized crafts, recreation, a hike day, free time before campfire & activities afterward.

Registration information is provided in 2019 Camp Brochures available on table in the narthex. Talk to Peggy Hoover, Edie Ransom or Elaine Forcier (Camp Board Members) or see the camp Facebook page. Lynda Sesser is Camp Registrar (209) 527-8613. **You can also register and pay with a credit card online. Go to the camp website:**

www.camppeacefulpines.org, and look for the link associated with each camp. ~Elaine Forcier, Camp Peaceful Pines Rep

KIDS' PEACE WEEK

June 10-14



"Unity: Coming Together For Peace"

With all the divisiveness in our world today, it is important to work at ways to be tolerant of differences. We need to look for how and where we can be united, which enables us to live more peacefully. Thus, our theme "Unity: Coming Together for Peace". Children will be looking at the many ways that we are different and how to be compassionate and tolerant of those differences through games, songs and art projects. Children entering kindergarten through 6th grade are invited to join in the fun at the Modesto Church of the Brethren. The dates and times are Monday June 10th through Friday June 14th from 9 am-12 pm.

We will end the week with an evening dinner and program Friday night, June 14th at 6 pm. The cost for the week is \$15 per child with a maximum of \$35 per family. The charge includes a shirt, all activities and snacks, as well as the dinner and program Friday night. Registration forms are available on the table in the church entry. **Advance registration by Sunday, May 26th is greatly appreciated** and can be mailed to the Church of the Brethren office, at 2301 Woodland Ave., 95358. If you have questions, please call Karleen Daniels at 209 484 3163.



The sanctuary lights have recently been checked and replaced. Some of the lights in the front of the sanctuary required putting a 12 ft ladder on top of the rock facing that is about 10 ft high. Not a job for the elderly or the faint of heart! Thank you, Robinson Lighting. ~Bill Johnson

What to Do With the "North 40"?

During the discussion period with the new pastor and the board the subject was brought up as to how to best use the vacant land behind the church.

The idea was put forth for a volunteer committee to be formed and an interested group to work on each idea. The plan would be for over the next 6 months to do the legwork and the research for each idea and to put that work into a written report. For example: if your project would send you to city hall or the planning commission you would note names and phone numbers and the results of your discussions. For each idea we would work out the pros and cons of the idea and the major hurdles to be cleared for the idea to be a success. We would gather these ideas in a binder in the church office so that when we were ready to seriously move forward on any one of them we would not have to reinvent the wheel.

Projects discussed at the meeting. (There may be more)

Dog Park

Soccer Field

Walnuts / trees / Almonds

Senior Housing

Community Garden

If you are interested in working on any aspect of this project, contact Bill Johnson.



Condensed Calendar

Monday, May 20

5:30 pm Ladies' Night Out-Olive Garden

Tuesday, May 21

Wednesday, May 22

6 pm Faith Bites

Potluck!

NO Choir

Thursday, May 23

Friday, May 24

Saturday, May 25

Opening Camp Peaceful Pines

Next Sunday, May 26

9:30 am Sunday Study

11 am Worship

Do you have an announcement you would like the congregation to see on the big screen, before Sunday worship begins? Please send any announcements to the church office at office@modcob.org by Wednesday evenings. Thank you!

dates
to Remember

MAY

May 27 Memorial Day—Office closed

JUNE

June 9 12:15pm Special Council Meeting

June 10 6:30 pm Board Meeting

June 10-14 Peace Week

June 13 7:05pm Sr. Ministries -Modesto Nuts
Baseball Game

June 14 6pm FUN Event(part of Peace Week)

June 15 11am Fathers' Day Bash

June 16 Fathers' Day

June 20 6pm SCIC Prayer Supper
ModestoIslamic Center

June 21-23 Women's Retreat—CPP

June 30 Prospector Potluck-Hernandez home

JULY

July 3-7 Annual Conference-Greensboro, N.C.

July 4 Independence Day - Office Closed

*Articles and photos for
the next issue of Chimes
are due by Saturday,
June 1.*

Email to:

chimes@modcob.org

The Editor thanks you.