

### **PROVERBS 8:22-31**

The Lord created me at the beginnings of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth—when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first bits of soil. 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.

### **ROMANS 5:1-5**

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

### **RETURN JOURNEY**

**Proverbs 8:22-31**  
**Romans 5:1-5**

Five year old Sheru Munshi Khan and his older brother were busy with their nightly task of scavenging train cars in India. They looked for anything they could either eat or sell. This is a common practice among children from the barrios. It was best done at dark when they would

escape being spotted by a watchman. On this particular evening, Sheru was tired and his brother left him in a train car while he went off to search on his own. Sheru fell asleep and when he awoke the train was moving and he was trapped.

Can you imagine yourself in this predicament? He was hungry and totally ignorant about where the train was headed and when it would stop so he could get off. Fourteen hours later, it finally ended its journey in Kolkata which was more than 900 miles from his home in an area where he did not speak the language. So, he ended up on the streets where he already knew how to survive by scrounging through discarded food boxes and by rummaging through the landfills, drinking from faucets and fleeing from gangs that kidnapped street kids and sold them to sex providers. He didn't know the name of his hometown and had no idea how he would ever return. By the grace of God, he was discovered by a social worker and ended up being adopted by an Australian couple and was taken roughly 5700 miles away from India.

Fifteen years later when he was twenty, Saroo Brierley, as he was now called, could not shake memories of his hometown and his family. After a dogged five-year search, Brierley found his hometown and thanks to Google Earth, journeyed to India where he was reunited with his birth mother. He recalled this reunion as the "most pivotal moment" of his life. The 2016 movie "Lion" recounts the journey.

I love our passage from Proverbs. It is poetic and rich in imagery and emotion. And in order for us to capture its beauty and significance, we need to understand its background so that we can grasp its meaning and appreciate its relevance for our spiritual evolution.

First, notice that it is written in the first person who describes herself as a *Master Worker* who is by the side of God, the Creator, *rejoicing before him always; rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race*. Who is this mysterious entity mentioned nowhere else in the Bible; this female presence who was herself created at the very beginning before the Creator even began his work?

Earlier in Proverbs, the author, purported to be Solomon, uses the Hebrew word for

“Wisdom”, which is a feminine noun, to identify her. A masculine noun is used to identify God as the “Creator.” This is important because it balances the male and female characteristics of the Divine. And when you consider it from a spiritual perspective, creation itself must be a combination of male and female energies in which humanity reflects the Divine. We believe we are created in God’s image; therefore, the male and female qualities must be merged and, in that engagement, there is the pure joy which is expressed in this passage.

And doesn’t psychology tell us that we all have both male and female characteristics within us, both of which are expressed in our behavior and emotions? For example, typical male characteristics are strength and aggression while the female counterparts are nurture and comfort. Ideally a person has a balance of the two and can exercise more of one or the other situationally. And the intent of Solomon is to present God as wholistic—both powerful and tender and everything in between.

In Sheru’s fifteen year Journey Home, whether he realized it or not, he was relying upon a homing power within all of us which calls to us and leads us back to God. Hopefully, we don’t get as far off the track from home as Sheru did. But a significant part of any human journey is wandering astray from our Beloved Creator. Fortunately, as given expression in the Parable of the Prodigal, God always wants us back and provides us with spiritual tools to find our way. It is rather like Hansel and Gretel dropping bread crumbs so they could find their way back home. And I would posit that there is a spiritual energy within us that keeps dropping those bread crumbs which we can access through prayer, contemplation and quiet listening. It’s all in there.

Paul assures his readers in the Roman church that we have *peace with God through Jesus Christ*. Life changes continuously. Our fates are fickle. We are constantly surprised by events which alter the course we believed we were walking. We make mistakes. And who had better credibility on this issue than Paul who *boasted in his sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts*

*through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us?*

The point is, there is no end to the beginning. The Holy Spirit is the connector between now and the eternal. We change, life changes, but God does not change. God is the constant who sends out homing signals so that we can find the safety of the runway through the clouds, storms and fog of our existence.

This is Good News. Even when we feel we have been deserted or have become hopelessly lost in our wandering, believing it is impossible to return home, the truth is different. *Hope does not disappoint us.* The Spirit has been given to us. Listen deeply to yourself every day even when you don't feel like it. It's one breadcrumb after another.

Reverend Thomas Dunlap

June 12, 2022