

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight.
Luke 12:6

Cog in the Wheel

This week, I will have my last four radiation treatments. Hallelujah! And on Friday, my doctor implied that if I haven't felt much fatigue by now, I might not suffer from fatigue after all. Hallelujah times two! Thanks for your prayers; they are effective.

Being a preacher causes many of us to reflect theologically even on ordinary life experiences. Whenever I have been in many of my recent medical procedures, and especially in my daily radiation treatments, I feel like I'm in some science fiction movie, with these massive machines rotating around me, making loud mechanical noises. Sometimes I wonder if part of the design of these machines (and the noises they make) contribute to the medical theatre that gives us confidence we are receiving the most state-of-the-art treatments. For my sanity's sake, I have to trust that these machines are doing what my body needs.

At the same time, I am thinking ahead to my life in retirement. (Did I tell you that the Executive Presbyter search is officially open and the Nominating Committee has already received applications? Hallelujah times three! Not only is the position open, but the profile the EPNC produced is beautiful, and I believe is reflective of the unique vision of this presbytery. Hallelujah times four!)

As I enter into new activities and groups that are not directly attached to my role as Executive Presbyter, I am reminded what happens when strangers look at this loud, overweight, cocky and outspoken now gray-haired Asian woman for the first several times. My past experience (and recent new experiences) has been that folks assume I don't know what I know (or only know what they know), and there's something a little odd about me because I am not the genteel, deferential young woman North Americans so often think all Asian women should be. I am struck by the disparate ways I am seen by, say, Presbyterian leaders vs. folks who don't know I am ordained; other Asians vs. folks who are far from the immigrant experience; or men vs. women (in unexpected ways). So while my title or reputation tends to offer me some measure of trust or respect, without it I go back to being seen as the loud, overweight, cocky and outspoken now gray-haired Asian woman who doesn't fit well into most people's world views, so needs to be dismissed or reshaped to fit. I confess it feels more frustrating than humbling!

But if I reflect on these new experiences, I am reminded of the paradox of Psalm 8. We humans are tiny specks of creation, yet God has cared for us with love, and entrusted us to care for all the rest of creation. How we respond to the assumptions made by strangers depends on our patience and the comfort we receive knowing that God has more confidence in us than many other humans do.

So while this world may want to write us off as a cog in the wheel, may we remember the trust God has in us, and the gifts God has offered us, that far exceed even what we recognize. May we learn to see ourselves and others as God sees us—not clouded by prejudice, inflated by wishful thinking, but clarified with an honest assessment of our current and potential selves, and called forth to be a small but essential part of God's great plan of salvation. Hallelujah times five!

With thanks,

Wenley