Matariki
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Year C, Matariki
Wisdom 7:16-22; Matthew 6:19-34
22 June 2025

In these troubled times, it's challenging to stand here and speak words that touch our heart break, are real, allow us to be open, honest, genuinely present to our experience of anguish and pain and dare to suggest there's more than only this. As if to rescue or save us from our experience, provide salve or solution, some way out of our bewildered not knowing what to do, to understand how to be, what to think. To relieve us of our not knowing. Yet this is the seat of our beginning. It's the place we find ourselves. From this place we can open ourselves to grow in understanding.

Quite how have we ended up in a world expressing itself as it is? One of the effects of Covid was that the thread of our understanding and assumptions of life, that structure that enabled us to negotiate life, was loosened. As we engage in life post Covid (or living with Covid differently) that loosened thread seems to have unravelled something previously fundamental. Ideals of common good, mutual aid, dignity and respect of the other seem to have become **optional** and loudly so in the public square, no longer **foundational** to the fabric of our human relating.

Such shift coincided with a surge in the development and normalizing of the virtual reality platform. Accelerated perhaps by Covid isolation. The shift to online everything, easy access to any and everything from the comfort of home. Unfiltered access to information aligned to your preference, the rise of the keyboard warrior, the influence of unknown, anonymized experts. The net effect of instant and easy

connection requiring no physical contact is to exacerbate isolation and separateness.

What has this to do with Matariki you may be wondering? Matariki, the rising constellation of stars visible at this time in these Southern climes. As we pay attention, we learn of traditions associated with its rising. We could see taking time for Matariki as a gift in a time when increasingly our relating to one another and the world is virtually distanced less physically grounded. When availability to up to date news feeds threatens to entangle and overwhelm us. Matariki calls us to remember the ways we humans have lived and been. Reconnects us with the natural rhythm and cycle of the physical world, the steady turn of the seasons of life, to the physical world we see and know.

The book of Wisdom speaks of this. Through the gift of wisdom, we have come to understand what we perceive, learned and organized our experience of the natural world, so to make sense of it. We learn our place, to align ourselves to the whole of which we are a part.

Returned to such awareness, at Matariki the transitory nature of existence, of our participation in the turning of life and death are spoken. The opportunity we have to live into the richness of creation, the source and sustainer of our flourishing. Matariki rises at a pivot time of the year as we tip from shortest day darkness to promise of lengthening light. A time for looking back, with thanksgiving. Acknowledging all we've received from those gone before, gladness rimmed with sadness for those no longer with us. Awareness of now, our place and part in receiving and tending the gifts bestowed us, for those who are yet to come. Looking, hoping forward, living aware that what we do now will be the ground for those who are yet to be.

Whether conscious to this or not, it's the way things are. Life is transitory, in constant flux and ever more precious for being so. The words from Wisdom and the gospel, the traditions associated with Matariki remind us of what we know. We've learned the rhythm and pattern of this planet. If we're wise, we'll allow such knowledge to indwell us, to inform and direct our living. Or, though we've learned these things, we may forget. Turn from them to our own thinking,

create and generate worlds and ways of thinking that may be brilliant yet are disconnected from the earthy grounding of our existence.

Blessed we are by the miracle of smartphones, smart watches, smaller, faster computers, AI for speed and efficiency, to have to think less and do more. But have you noticed how such amazing devices have come to control us? The stature of the modern human, slightly hunched, head down, peering at hand, eyes focused, mind completely absorbed, known to speak out loud in public randomly in a totally justifiable way that doesn't require medication (that we know of), occasional twist then tap of wrist. Such devices have become our world, we look to them to be informed, gain knowledge, connect and validate our existence, be in relationship – though we may never have felt so lonely.

By contrast Matariki asks something different of us. To step into a physical experience in real time, outdoors into darkness. To straighten our stance, pull our shoulders back to look skyward. As our chests open, we breathe deeply of the natural air. As we cast our eyes skyward, we experience the physical world around us. The scale of things, our small relativeness in all that is, the spin of life that continues oblivious to our transitory magnificence.

How we live matters. Our frustration and anger at all that's taking place, the injustice and suffering, the misuse and abuse, it's important to be able to name it in a place such as this and know it is heard. These walls have held in their embrace those who've witnessed the worst that humans can do, and the best, and all that lies between. They hold us now in these times, just as we can each other. Can we do so and resist the temptation to stay ensnared in the impossibility of things over which we have no control? For, if we cannot, we may inadvertently end up participating in the prevailing culture against which we would stand, as victims.

We don't know what to do to change things and it's overwhelming. Are we able to shorten that to say simply, we don't know? It might allow us to rest a little, to lay our burden down. And it may open us up, each of us to see and understand differently, other than our habitual ways. In this transitory life we only have the choice we make

in each moment. And we can only choose from the wisdom and knowledge we open ourselves to. If we're attentive to our choosing we're enabled to notice the trajectory of our choices and to learn from this. Let me leave you with a story from the Cherokee tradition: The Wolves Within.

An old Grandfather, whose grandson came to him with anger at a friend who had done him an injustice, said, "Let me tell you a story. I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times."

He continued, "It is as if there are two wolves inside me; one is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way."

"But the other wolf, ah! He is full of anger. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit."

The boy looked intently into his grandfather's eyes and asked, "Which one wins, Grandfather?" The Grandfather solemnly said, "The one I feed."[1]

[1] https://theacademy.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/two-wolves-cherokee-story.pdf