

*A Cheyenne elder of my acquaintance once told me that the best way to find something is not to go looking for it. This is a hard concept for a scientist.*

*(Gathering Moss: Robin Wall Kimmerer p. 9)*

It's a hard concept for most of us, most of the time, for we want to be in control of what we are looking for – of what we find. The story of Adam and Eve is, perhaps, a commentary on this desire to be in control and what they find instead is something they weren't looking for at all, and hadn't even imagined: the awareness of their desire to control; the possibility of what they thought of as good, as an evil; the trial of knowing good from evil and becoming responsible for their choice. The Law will later put all this down in a written code but, as Paul clearly saw, the Law becomes itself an aid to evil, giving voice, as it were, to temptation in the same way the serpent does here. The coming of Jesus, and his life and death, give us a possibility of reverting once again to the possibility of waiting on God for God's goodness to be revealed, both in ourselves and all creation; for the possibility, that is, of not being in control and seeing it as a good. It's fitting, then, that Mary is recognised as having this potential from conception so that her choice of not being in control but surrendering to God's will is all the more possible – including her choice of 'Jesus' as the child's name. Or, in the words, once more, of Robin Wall Kimmerer,

*In indigenous ways of knowing, all beings are recognised as non-human persons, and all have their own names. It is a sign of respect to call a being by its name, and a sign of disrespect to ignore it. Words and names are the ways we build relationship, not only with each other, but with plants. (Gathering Moss p. 13)*

So perhaps we can see the naming of Jesus as, not only the beginning of our restoration of ourselves to God and to ourselves, but a restoration of ourselves to the rest of creation – not as a method of control but of recognition.

*With words at your disposal, you can see more clearly. Finding the words (or, better, receiving them as a gift) is another step in learning to see. (Gathering Moss p. 12)*

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