

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

Trinity Sunday: June 15, 2025

“Wisdom”

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on Trinity Sunday. It is also Father's Day! In today's reading we get to see God our Father work with wisdom to create our world.

In our reading from Proverbs, the text we have is a speech by "wisdom" who is presented as an active agent who has a voice for self-announcement. In ancient Hebrew culture it is the work of the poet that brings availability to what remains hidden in mystery, but is deeply operative in the working of creation. For God, his creation is ultimately a work of art. Yes, even you, are a work of art.

Wisdom describes herself as the "master worker" who did the work of the creator. Wisdom brought delight and joy to the creator. Wisdom is the one in whom the creator is well-pleased. This reflects a close companionship between wisdom, creation, and the creator.

Wisdom describes its', or should I say her, relationship to all the creatures who come after and in the wake of wisdom. Not only are all the other creatures coming after, but they are created in and through the work of wisdom. Thus, before wisdom there were no deep seas, no springs of water, no hills, no fields, no "bits of soil." The creator was able to proceed with wisdom in creating the exact of everything, the season for everything, all to work in great harmony.

Thus, this entire speech of wisdom is a summons to humanity. Note that the wisdom tradition is famous for lacking all partisan interest, so that no specific group or community or nation is ever addressed. The truth of wisdom pertains to all human beings without exception. Wisdom summons human beings, all of them, to "learn prudence, and acquire intelligence" meaning please pay attention to the order of things! And in return wisdom assures that those who heed wisdom are happy and have life. Conversely those who lack wisdom injure themselves and love death.

The more specific, immediate, and practical instruction in the rest of the book of Proverbs gives substance to what it means to "be wise." There is the teaching of wisdom concerning respect for the poor, the importance of generative work, the danger of careless speech, the risk of unpayable debt, and the hazard of having the wrong kind of friends. These very specific forms of unwise conduct will diminish the wellbeing of a person or community, whereas good work, good speech, good friends, and respect for the poor - all made with the counsel of wisdom - will bring wellbeing to a person and the community. Wisdom guarantees it!

The point is that the world is not randomly "disconnected" so that we can do stupid destructive things with long-term impunity. The creator God, via wisdom, assures the connection between the choices we make and the outcomes with which we must live. That is, it is all about what is mentioned multiple times in the Bible: "sowing and reaping." The moral coherence that wisdom assures is generative. Do well and people prosper, do cruel and stupid things and people fail, or even worse, die.

So, what is the connection between living a wise life and the suffering we all still endure in our lives at times? Religious traditions always flirt with the idea that suffering is somehow "payback" for sin. If that were true, then suffering people would have to wonder, "What did I do wrong?" Even Jesus addresses this with the blind man whose disciples ask him who sinned, him or his parents? Which always leads me back to the story of Job - when some of Job's misguided friends suggest that he undertake a self-examination, for clearly, he must have sinned.

For those of us who look to Christ's faithfulness, however, suffering is not a sign of God's lack of favor toward us. Because in reality, God has no lack of favor toward us, he created us with wisdom. And we need wisdom to function, especially in a sinful world that propagates suffering. In the context of God's grace, through Christ, as we are told in Paul's Epistle, suffering works to strengthen the resolve and character of those enduring it.

For the blind man (through Jesus, his circumstances brought glory to God) and even in Job's case, God made right what the devil had made wrong. In our case Christ has brought us into right relationship with God - when the world cannot.

Of course, the reality is that there are many dimensions of our life in God that we don't understand, including the Trinity. And we may not understand these until we are seated at the heavenly banquet. Jesus today clearly tells us this mystery is God's will.

In today's brief Gospel which is another portion from Jesus' farewell sermon we are not told how everything works, we are only told that Jesus will not tell us, as we cannot bear it. But, he does hint that in the future, in the unfolding of time, we will be told and understand. And we are told how we will hear, through the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of truth who will guide us, speak to us, and declare everything we need to know. Through the nurturing of our faith, and seeking out the Spirit we will receive the wisdom we need to find peace in our lives, even through the rough stuff.

And it is also wise to remember that having peace in your life doesn't mean everything is quiet, or perfect. Instead it means the Holy Spirit will guide you and you will find yourself in the right time at the right place – even if it feels wrong, because the mystery will always remain.

Last week we were told by Jesus that the Holy Spirit will help us understand what has already happened. This week Jesus tells us that the Spirit will also tell us about things to come. And though Jesus describes the Holy Spirit's actions in the future tense, we are meant to read them as *our* current reality. I find this a unique approach to giving a holistic view of the Spirit's work: the Spirit is the Spirit of truth of all time, helping us discern with wisdom our current times in light of God and God's gospel.

Lastly, Jesus desires that you find peace and hope, in knowing that it is OK to not know everything. We continue to gain wisdom, and it always seems the more you know the more you realize you know nothing. But one thing is certain, if we follow the way of Jesus, we will find peace.

I have spoken to many of you over the years, and when it comes to talking about the Holy Spirit working in your lives, the stories are many. So is the grace, love and hope that we all try to live into. Listen to the Holy Spirit and be wise, my friends, be wise. Amen