

June 12, 2022 - Trinity Sunday - a reflection

Proverbs 8:1-4,22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

“O Lord our governor, how majestic is your name in all the world!” With these words the Psalmist begins to extol the wonders of the God he has come to know. We echo his words in the songs of praise to God we sing during our worship services. As he continues in his meditation the Psalmist wonders out loud why God has blessed humanity. He looks at the moon and the stars and compares their beauty to the reality of human sinfulness and so he asks ‘what is man (humanity) that you are mindful of him? After singing praises to God and contemplating the amazing love and grace he has poured out on creation and then look into the world around us to see what humanity has done within this beautiful creation I understand the question and am faced with a similar amazement. As a testimony to the love and grace of God the Psalmist says, ‘you have made humans a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour; you gave them mastery over the work of your hands; you put all things under his feet;’ There have been times when I have wondered, ‘what was God thinking?’ Why was such a level of trust and independence placed in the care of such fallible creatures? This is the nature of God on full display and it is a wonder to behold while we may be filled with many questions. The fact that is revealed in this psalm is that God did bestow glory and honour on humanity and gave them mastery over creation because of God’s nature of love and grace. Humanity has been given the opportunity to shine, and sometimes it has managed to do just that, but sometimes it has failed miserably. Still we rise and sing, ‘O Lord our governor, how exalted is your name in all the world!’ because of God’s reaction to the sinfulness of humanity. We probably would have scrapped the project and started over but God, in his great love, brought about a way for humanity to be saved and restored to the original plan. In this I see a Father who loves the child even though the child doesn’t always obey.

God’s reaction to the sinfulness of humanity resulted in a plan to bring about salvation. (At the root of that word is the concept of wholeness and so God is trying to restore wholeness to the human race) The work of restoration involved God in a different way. Jesus, as Israel’s representative, stood in the place of judgement and punishment and then was raised to new life. Scholars who have studied this point out that the death of a simple human could not have accomplished the forgiveness of sin so in some way that we all have difficulty in understanding Jesus was also God’s incarnation as a human being. Through his death a resurrection Jesus provided a way - a bridge was built over which humanity could return to the place of glory and honour even though they were guilty of a great offense to God. Jesus, the Son of God, purchased our way out of the depths because of God’s tremendous love and

devotion to the human race. In this I see a beloved friend who sacrifices so that others can become what they were meant to become. Father and Son working hand in hand accomplishes this.

But there is also an aspect of God which influences the daily life of those who come to believe in this message. This Holy Spirit is also a part of the Trinity we know as the One True God. This Holy Spirit has many traits and among them is the ability to foster fellowship among the believers. “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us” In reflecting on this reality I was reminded of one of my favourite songs which is called “the Servant Song”. It begins with the words ‘brother (or sister) let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you. Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.’ I love the song because it speaks clearly of the shared nature of our walk with God - the fellowship in which we live. While we each have to travel the path laid out for us we do not walk without help for the journey. The Servant Song continues with words such as, ‘I will weep when you are weeping, when you laugh I’ll laugh with you’ and ‘let me hold the Christ-light for you in the nighttime of your fears. I will bear your joys and sorrows, speak the peace you long to hear’. In a few short verses the Servant Song describes the Christian journey quite well and promises help and sustenance to all pilgrims on this journey. It speaks of the help given to us through the Holy Spirit without actually mentioning the Spirit. I thought of this song as I read the passage from Romans which is placed before us on this Trinity Sunday. The passage begins with the acknowledgment that we not only journey with each other but we journey with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that we have ‘obtained access to this grace in which we stand’. It may sound trite to say that Jesus walks with us but I can attest to the truth of this statement from countless events in my own life. The beautiful ‘Footprints’ poem which is known to so many people also describes this reality in the image of the one set of footprints as Jesus carries the believer through the rough times. I offer a short reflection on the passage from Romans in the hope that it will help you experience that traveling companion in a new and helpful way.

St. Paul goes on to suggest that we ‘boast in our sufferings’. I know many people who are suffering who are not exactly boasting about it so I wonder what St. Paul means by this. I have found that any boasting about suffering comes well after the suffering has ended. Looking backward into the situation we are sometimes given the ability to discern how Jesus was in the midst of the journey with us. When we’re in the midst of the suffering our concentration is on our trial but St. Paul invites us, if we can, to contemplate a wider perspective.

Paul reminds us that often our suffering produces endurance. I remember hockey practices which

were not very pleasant - particularly when learning a new skill. Each time we practiced we became more able to do the exercises and we increased in our endurance. This is the picture Paul holds out for us. Living this life takes endurance and our suffering is one of the ways in which that endurance is built up - as unpleasant as the process can be sometimes. If we are suffering it may be that we are going to need some extra endurance so God uses the occasion of our suffering to build us up by partnering with us but insisting that we apply the effort.

He goes on to say that endurance produces character. I have known some people in whom this character has been produced in great quantity. It isn't that they don't suffer or even complain about their suffering but it is the fact that there is no quitting in them. Steadfastness is the word which is sometimes used to describe certain people and that kind of character is often produced through building up endurance through suffering. Finally, says St. Paul, this character that has been built through suffering and endurance produces hope. Hope is described in some literature as 'the expectation of something good which shapes the way we wait'. Hope is based on the reality of God who promises help and strength in our journey and who gathers us into groups to encourage and challenge us. All this is true, St. Paul says, 'because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us'.

The 'Servant Song' reminds us that we are not alone in the journey and that we are 'here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load' and the passage from Romans reminds us that God is walking with us through all of it.

A Father who gave us a tremendous amount of trust and responsibility who does not abandon us when we mess up. A Son who stood (and stands) in the gap for us and has made it possible for us to be restored to our original purpose through the sacrifice of his life. A Spirit who brings the reality of God into every day life. This is the God about whom we sing, "O Lord our governor, how majestic is your name in all the world!"

I pray that as you ponder the words of scripture held out for us this week you will be blessed with the awareness of Jesus walking with you and holding your hand as you journey through whatever struggle is part of your life this day.

*Glen +*