

TRINITY SUNDAY

Year C

This Bible study was written by Anna Sutterisch for Trinity Sunday (C) in 2019.

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

8 Does not wisdom call
and understanding raise her voice?
2 On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
3 beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
4 “To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all who live.

22 “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
23 Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
24 When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth,
26 when he had not yet made earth and fields
or the world’s first bits of soil.
27 When he established the heavens, I was there;
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
28 when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
29 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his
command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
30 then I was beside him, like a master worker,
and I was daily his delight,
playing before him always,
31 playing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

Commentary from Anna Sutterisch

The book of Proverbs is a collection of traditional cultural lessons—propositional statements, observational sayings, analogies, and ethics—structured as the teachings of a father to a son. This kind of “instructional literature” is one of the ways a family nurtures how a child is socialized into a certain world. These proverbs were passed on in the oral tradition and are therefore used extremely contextually: they use references and assumptions housed in a particular time, place, and culture. This particular passage comes from the Proverbs of Solomon (David’s son, King of Israel.)

Wisdom is one of the major themes here. The Proverbs illustrate wisdom as an agent of Yahweh, present and active even in determining the shape of creation. Wisdom (anthropomorphized throughout Proverbs as a lady or goddess) was involved in the creation of the world, and so forms a bridge between the Creator and the created. This offers an alternative way to see the relationship between God and the universe— instead of blind obedience, here we have collaboration and co-creation. This kind of relationship teaches that by acquiring wisdom, human beings can also share in the wisdom of God and can flourish and receive a sense of purpose and meaning. As Walter Brueggemann says, “This is indeed literature for ‘grown-ups.’”

Discussion Questions

What kind of sayings, analogies, and proverbs have socialized you in your context? Think about the aphorisms, nursery rhymes, songs, family tales, etc. that have influenced you.

How does or can wisdom help grow your relationship with God?

Psalm 8

- ¹ O Lord our Governor, *
 how exalted is your Name in all the world!
- ² Out of the mouths of infants and children *
 your majesty is praised above the heavens.
- ³ You have set up a stronghold against your
 adversaries, *
 to quell the enemy and the avenger.
- ⁴ When I consider your heavens, the work of your
 fingers, *
 the moon and the stars you have set in their
 courses,
- ⁵ What is man that you should be mindful of him? *
 the son of man that you should seek him out?
- ⁶ You have made him but little lower than the angels;*
 you adorn him with glory and honor;
- ⁷ You give him mastery over the works of your
 hands;*
 you put all things under his feet:
- ⁸ All sheep and oxen, *
 even the wild beasts of the field,
- ⁹ The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, *
 and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.
- ¹⁰ O Lord our Governor, *
 how exalted is your Name in all the world!

Commentary from Anna Sutterisch

We read today's psalm in robust praise of the God who has created "all that is, seen and unseen," as the words of the Nicene Creed attest. However, the psalm also reminds us that all of creation, including us, still depends on God. God sends forth his Spirit, the psalmist tells us, and the world is not only formed but continuously renewed. We should rejoice not only in the fact of creation but in the gift of the Spirit that works to renew God's world with each and every day.

Discussion Questions

Can you recall a time when you were especially dependent upon God's grace? What events brought you to that realization?

Looking back, how did the Holy Spirit sustain and renew you?

Romans 5:1-5

5 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.³ And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Commentary from Anna Sutterisch

Paul testifies that when we allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit of God, we show ourselves to be children of God. Having been adopted by God, we nevertheless still share with Christ as heirs to God's promise of new life. Paul suggests that when we suffer, we should recall that Christ suffered, yet ultimately was glorified. May we one day share in Christ's glory.

Discussion Questions

In God's economy, nothing is wasted, not even suffering. How can you make meaning out of your suffering? How can you make your pain purposeful?

John 16:12-15

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Commentary from Anna Sutterisch

A few years ago, I went through a really horrible situation. I kept thinking I had hit rock bottom, and then I would find that I could, in fact, fall even lower. If I had seen the whole story at once, all the trips and stumbles it would take for me to be whole again, I would probably have given up. Instead, I could only look at what was right in front of me— one day at a time.

Jesus knew that sometimes the whole story is too big, scary, and complex to tell at once. This passage from John comes from the account of the “last supper.” Jesus tells his friends that the truth he has told them so far is radically incomplete. As Martin Smith writes, “They are incapable of taking in any more until his death, resurrection, and ascension have opened up a totally new relationship with God.”

With the Spirit’s help, the truth of God’s love and Jesus’ resurrection will continually be revealed to the disciples and to us. As our lives continually change, we will continually be moved into deeper relationship with Christ. And we will hear what we need to hear, even if it’s not the whole story.

Discussion Questions

How do you make space to listen to the Spirit in your life?