

First Lesson: Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Second Lesson: Romans 5:1-5

Gospel Lesson: John 16:12-15

Holy Trinity Sunday

June 16, 2022

“A Head Scratcher”

Sermon by Pastor Paul Campbell

Grace and peace to you from Him who was, who is and who is to come, Jesus the Christ our Lord. Amen.

The title of this sermon, “Head Scratcher,” came to mind when I finished reading and doing some digging into the three scriptures that we have for this morning, Holy Trinity Sunday. Somewhere in my 43 years of writing sermons I adopted the technique of “mind mapping,” which I’ll show you in a minute, when first thinking about a sermon. It’s basically an exercise where you have some thoughts, you pray about it, you think about it, and then instead of trying to put some order to it, you just put it all on a whiteboard or a piece of paper. And in full disclosure, this was mine [screen display], and you can see why this was a head scratcher.

So, after I put all these words on the whiteboard, there would usually be some enlightenment. It didn’t happen. Obviously I’m not too concerned about drawing straight lines, so I started connecting the dots a little bit on my whiteboard, and we were getting there. It was about that time that Dr. James walked into my office and he looked at the whiteboard, and he said, “There’s your sermon title, it’s head scratcher. It’s all scratched up.” So that is where I really started to focus on this. As I went through the mind map and re-read the scripture a few times, I decided to focus on the text from Proverbs, one of the books of the Bible known as “wisdom literature.”

Now of course, we Lutherans love the Romans text because that was Martin Luther’s favorite text, and that would have been easy. Also the Gospel of John is very insightful in that he was writing toward the end of the first century, so it was way past the events that happened, and he was trying to bolster up his motley band of believers. But I decided that Proverbs was the one that was coming to me through this mind map. And it is wisdom that I would like to talk about.

Wisdom is in the Proverbs and in all the books of wisdom. Wisdom is something that we seek daily. So there are a couple of things that you need to know first of all about wisdom. First of all, it’s very, very, female... I’m waiting for some response out of the females in the crowd here. Everybody knows this, right? Right? As it is written in all the literature of wisdom in the Old Testament, it is clearly female, it is mother wisdom. It is very obvious. Also, it is very interesting to read that the Creator was not alone at the creation – now just ponder *that*. I’m not going to talk about that because that is a *real* head scratcher. But Wisdom was with God at the Creation, mother wisdom was there. So, the first part of this text is very clear about what Wisdom is trying to teach us.

Wisdom is to know and instruct, and this was written back in 400 and 600 BC, and obviously the Hebrew people were doing some head scratching 2500 years ago. But the whole idea of this wisdom is to focus on the gifts of God. From a Christian perspective we are asked and we are encouraged to continue to see God in our lives, in our daily activity. And when the going gets tough, to even look even deeper. But isn’t it the case that when we get into those kinds of positions, as fallible human beings we often start seeing what is wrong around us – what the problem is. We don’t see the obvious beauty and the love that is around us sometimes, sometimes we get so focused on what is wrong.

About 51 years ago, when Donna and I first got married, we had no money, but we decided to go to one of our favorite places, the Rocky Mountains. We grew up in Nebraska and went to school in Lincoln. It’s an easy drive to get to the Rocky Mountains, and for the most part you can go there and enjoy it without having to spend a bunch of money. We had our minimum wage jobs, we had student debts, we had all that kind of stuff, and we just wanted a nice cheap, relaxing, beautiful honeymoon. So, we headed out. Of course, this was way before GPS’s and way before cell phones. I had some sort of map that showed us where Colorado was. It wasn’t all that detailed, but being the newlywed husband, I made it clear to Donna that I had everything under control. I knew exactly where we were going, and don’t worry about it. And Donna being Donna, said “Are you sure?” She still says that. And I go, “Yeah, absolutely.”

So, we headed out because we wanted to see the Poudre Valley in the Rocky Mountains. We had been there once before, it's a beautiful area. So, we got there and I had found a cheap motel near the foot of the Rockies. We got up early in the morning and we headed out in our little car for Poudre Valley. And we drove, and we were going through the mountains and through the passes, and we were looking for Poudre Valley. And we were really getting frustrated because we could not find it. We saw some goats, we saw some deer, we saw some nice landscape, but we could not find Poudre Valley. Finally it was getting dark, and we figured that we'd better head back out or we were never going to find our way. But as we were driving out we saw a cabin, probably about 25 yards off the road. We drove in the driveway, and there was a woman who obviously had been living in her cabin for a long time. She was splitting wood. And we pulled in there, and we said, "Sorry we just need your help. Can you tell us, for tomorrow where Poudre Valley is?" And she looked at us, gave a sigh, shook her head, and she said, "You're in Poudre Valley."

We had spent the day looking for Poudre Valley and we did not notice that we were in it. What had happened was that we didn't see all the wonderful things that were around us because we were so intent on finding Poudre Valley.

Sometimes in life we miss the obvious that's around us, when we forget to focus on the creation, forget to focus on the love of the people around us. And the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, that still small voice, can help us understand that it's right here. It's right here. It's right in our lives, no matter all the bumps that we hit, we still have the support of God for sure, and certainly other people. Wisdom says to us, "To you oh people I call, and my cry is to all that live." In this sense the Holy Trinity, Creator, Savior, and Holy Spirit is encompassed in the words of the wisdom of Proverbs. Searching for the Poudre Valley and not understanding that we were already there is a good metaphor for understanding wisdom. What we are looking for, regardless of our age, is already inside of us and already inside of others. It's already inside the Creation, if we just keep ourselves open to that.

And for those of us who have been walking around for a few decades, we need to remember that life experience – walking the road with God the Creator, God the Savior, and God the Holy Spirit – has given us wisdom that we can impart to other people. We know that are lots of occasions, physically and emotionally that fog our lens so that we don't see the wisdom, but that is our challenge. Our challenge is to listen to Mother Wisdom, listen to the wisdom that is coming to us. And in all our ups and downs, to be aware of whose we are and where we are. And to understand that Wisdom and experience bring understanding, in knowing that we are loved creatures of God. So, ponder this, what Poudre Valleys have you faced in your life, or are facing in your life?

There are loving, good opportunities that are right in front of us that we are missing. And the other piece of this, of course, is that we are to be that Poudre Valley to other people. When we understand that, we have a challenge to give somebody that love. We know that God the Holy Spirit is always with us, empowering us and giving us that set of wisdom lenses to know what is right.

The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom, we need to embrace that. We don't talk about wisdom necessarily enough. But it is also that empowerment we have to help other people. Our next song says that so well, so as we sing "Here I am Lord," think about that. Think about what you are called to be today to other people around you.

That is the Good News. Amen.