June 16th, 2019

Springfield Presbyterian Church

Trinity Sunday

10:30 am

Wisdom of All Time

1. An Opportunity to Preach on the Holy Spirit

While last week at Pentecost we had the wonderful

opportunity to explore the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit’s calling on our lives, yet we recognize that Pentecost comes but once a year. What I mean by that is that we usually set that Sunday aside to speak directly about the Holy Spirit, but as the Sundays progress, we have the natural inclination to focus on the other two parts of the Trinity: God and Jesus.

And I think there’s good cause for that – it’s easier to preach upon God and Jesus because the Old and New Testaments give direct testimony to their actions. We can very clearly lift up texts where God is working through the Burning Bush in Moses’ accounts or we can turn to the multitude of parables or stories that Jesus shared through his brief life. The Holy Spirit is harder to preach upon – because the Holy Spirit is the felt, embraced, and lived experience within the lives of the faithful. The Holy Spirit is a nebulous, difficult part of the Trinity to really sum up in words or stories, and our Scriptural guidance is a bit more limited than the other parts of the Trinity.

That’s why today, as we have the opportunity, we are going to look again at the Holy Spirit, yet this time through the framework of Proverbs. Let’s lay down some concrete foundation on this text. A majority of Biblical scholars believe Proverbs was written by King Solomon and his encounters with wisdom. Wisdom is an expression of the Holy Spirit – in other words, feel free if it’s easier to call Wisdom the Holy Spirit – they are interchangeable within this text. What is also curious, is that Wisdom in Hebrew is Sophia, not only a beautiful girl’s name, but also informs us that in the Hebrew understanding, Wisdom or the Holy Spirit took on a feminine nature.

1. What are we trying to say

The central part of this text is a point that the proverb wants to drive home: Wisdom, or the Holy Spirit, was always around and will always be around. Sometimes, when we read from Acts, as we did last week, we can make an assumption that the Holy Spirit only came after Christ died, yet Proverbs reiterates in beautiful and earthy language that the Holy Spirit has been around since before time. In fact, the Holy Spirit was right alongside God as the creative co-creator of the universe.

As we hear the language used in Proverbs, we hear earthly words like mountains, fields, fountains, seas – but not words like ‘cathedrals, privileged homes, and temples.’ This is an important reminder to God’s people, as much as we can learn here in this sanctuary, the profound reality is one that Shirley Guthrie put poignantly: “God is not a prisoner of the Christian church.” In other words, we don’t have the sole claim of God - if you keep your eyes open, you will find the Spirit wherever you go.

John Calvin, one of our theological forefathers, shared this insight: “Wherever you cast your eyes, there is no spot in the universe where you cannot discern at least some sparks of God’s glory. You cannot in one glance survey this most vast and beautiful system of the universe, in its wide expanse, without being completely overwhelmed by the boundless force of its brightness.” For Calvin and Guthrie, and for ourselves, it is a reminder that the Holy Spirit is much bigger than these four walls – just look outside, you’ll find the Spirit at work.

The Holy Spirit dwells everywhere, and that is a great gift, to know that the Spirit that was at work when the heavens and the earth was created is the same Holy Spirit that guides you and me everyday. What if we were to listen closer, stop in our tracks more often, or reflect upon the beauty that the Spirit offers daily.

1. Kathleen Norris

In my research for this text this morning, I stumbled upon a beautiful narrative that was written by Kathleen Norris in her notable book, ‘The Cloister Walk.’ Let us together hear her human experience of wisdom at work:

“I was out shopping yesterday, and whom did I run into? Wisdom. Yeah, there she was. She called me over and we began talking, Wisdom and I. Then, I went down to the courthouse, and there she was again, making a plea for justice in some dingy courtroom where somebody had been unjustly accused. After that, I dropped by the school, and she had gotten there before me, calling for students and teachers alike always to seek truth. Then I went for a walk in the woods, moving along the trail in quiet meditation. Wisdom snuck up on me and said, ‘Now that we are alone, I have something I want to share with you, a present I want you to enjoy. You know, I have been around a long time, really before the beginning of time. I have been whirling and dancing with God all along. I am God’s delight, laughing and playing. I want you to know the lightness of spirit and gladness that come when you welcome me. Will you set aside those thoughts, words, and deeds that make life heavy and sad for you and others? Will you come and laugh and play with me? Will you come and dance with me? Will you?”

And the question resounds with us today, ‘Will you? Will we?’ As uncomfortable as it might be to think about part of the Trinity dancing and fluttering by and laughing and playing, I think it’s something that should humble us. God longs for God’s children to laugh and dance and play and enjoy this life – for we were created for good, for love, for beauty, and in that, we serve God, from that place of joy.

So will you? Will I? Will we together recognize the Holy Spirit at work, just as much as we see God and Jesus as part of the Trinity? Will we dare to lean on the fence and look out at the field and be in awe of the Spirit’s creation? Will we put our toes in the water of the sea or lake and take in the wonder of that sensation that God created before time? Will we look upon our lives, walk throughout our lives, and expect the mystery and dwell in the unknown, rather than jumping to hard and fast easy conclusions? Will we follow the wisdom, the Holy Spirit, into all beauty that has and will unfold?

IV. The Challenge

The hinge point for us too is that this way of thinking and being not only requires us to be a people who find beauty in the fields, at the sea, or looking out to the Sugarloaf mountains. This faithfulness requires us to find the Spirit in places where we struggle to see the Spirit: in the streets of downtown Baltimore, in the living room of men and women sharing drugs, in the bedroom of the suicidal teen who doesn’t know where his or her future lies. The Spirit is undeniably there and undeniably at work – it’s just harder to see, and it requires us as faithful people to be in those places, with those people, to point to a greater truth and a greater hope than one we can sense – one that reaches beyond ourselves.

Will you go and find the Spirit? Will you go to the beautiful places where flowers bloom? Will you go to the methodone clinic and see the Spirit at work? This Spirit, the Holy Spirit, was there before all time, is with us now, and will continue to be at work beyond us. Let us find the Holy Spirit wherever we go and respond in profound faithfulness. Amen.