

Sermon Notes – June 15, 2025
The Holy Gospel of St. John 16: 12-15
Peace Lutheran Church
“The On-Going Presence of Jesus!”

As seen in today's readings, God (the Father), Jesus, and the Holy Spirit interrelate and interact in ways difficult to boil down to simple metaphor. Our God is a relational, triune God who is before us, with us and for us.

Proverbs 8 is the most developed poetic personification of Wisdom in Hebrew Scriptures (compare Sirach 24: 1-22 – Sirach being a Hebrew writing that is included in the Old Testament of some Christian religions but not included in the Protestant Reformation Old Testament). Portrayed as created by God before creation, Wisdom resides in the Father's presence as a source of delight and joy. Wisdom's divine qualities detract from Israel's monotheistic confession (Deut. 6: 4-5), and they resonate with New Testament writings that speak of Jesus as preexistent with God (John 1: 1-5, 16-18; Col. 1: 16; Heb. 1: 2). That Proverbs characterizes Wisdom as a woman enriches our theological language and thinking beyond masculine metaphors. New Testament authors speak of Christ as “the Wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1: 24) in whom are wisdom's treasures (Col. 2: 3).

Romans 5 takes the results of God's justifying activity (3: 2-4: 25) and summarizes them in practical ways. Because of the justifying work of Christ, believers have peace with God and experience divine love through the work of the Holy Spirit. The language “boast” (vv. 2, 3) may better be rendered “take pride in”; Paul assumes everyone does this in relation to something. Paul emphasizes hope and encouragement, since he addresses believers experiencing regular hostility for their profession of faith. To such hearers, Paul encourages a counter-cultural and counter intuitive “boasting in our suffering” and anchored in Christian hope. The prominence of hope language attests to the passage's focus. Most poignantly, Paul professes that this hope will not shame or fail (kataischynei, NRSV “disappoint,” v. 5). Evidencing this, God's love has been “poured into our hearts” by the Spirit as an experiential confirmation to encourage believers - both ancient and modern.

Although brief, the gospel reading highlights the Spirit's work in relation to Jesus' ministry. The passage is the final segment among several in John's farewell discourse (13: 31-17: 26) where Jesus describes the arrival and work of the “Advocate” or “Spirit of truth” (14: 15-17, 25-26; 16: 7-15). Jesus promises that the Spirit “will guide you into all truth” and “will take what is mine and declare it to you” (vv. 13-14). Different from the emphases of Luke, Acts and Paul's letters, John's gospel characterizes the Spirit's primary purpose as ongoing

instruction of Jesus' teachings (see John 2: 20, 27). The closing verse is a summarizing glimpse of activity shared among the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit: what belongs to God both belongs to Jesus and is shared with others by the Spirit.

Christian confession in the Trinity comes not simply from abstract hypothesizing, but from the lived experience of early Christians. These experiences yield a collective vision of God so rich and multifaceted that later generations could not but articulate the trinitarian expression of creeds used to this day in worship.