

Trinity Sunday June 16th 2019 - Year C

Readings:

Proverbs 8:1–4, 22–31

Psalm 8

Romans 5:1–5

John 16:12–15

I love St. Luke's vestry meetings! I can assure you, I'm not going crazy; and it's not because last week's agenda was completed in 35 minutes. Let me explain.

The evening begins with optional attendance at a simple, contemplative Eucharist – we are nourished through silence, word and sacrament. Then food and wine is shared – a simple meal and attentive conversation. Vestry members are warmly welcomed as they arrive and are encouraged to participate in the hospitality and fellowship. Only then, does the meeting proper begin and it begins with prayer. During the meeting - sensitively facilitated by our people's warden Alan - each person present has the opportunity to speak, to question and put forth ideas, each person listens attentively and respectfully to the other. And as we stand in a circle with hands joined, the evening concludes with the offering to one another of words from scripture. *'May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.'*

Hospitality, communion, fellowship, prayer.... For me, St. Luke's vestry nights show forth a glimpse of Trinitarian life!

The glorious mystery of God calls us into intimate and eternal communion with the community of the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Spirit of truth guides us into this truth, just as it did (eventually) the first disciples. In John's gospel, Jesus – before his arrest, trial and death – encourages his disciples, saying no more than they can bear, but assuring them of his constant communion with them through the Spirit and with the Father. And like the disciples, who experienced the resurrected Christ, and the outpouring of the

Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we too are encouraged, empowered and called beyond the confusion of the world's (and our own) darkness and suffering, to rejoice in truth – and proclaim the love and glory of God – not least as we recognise it in God's creation and created beings.

Our reading from Proverbs introduces Lady Wisdom, described as being *with* God from the beginning, daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in the inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

It was Thomas Merton who wrote - *"Life is this simple. We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time."*

How are we to understand the words in Proverbs, which declare how Wisdom permeates the earth and how the world is shaped in such a way that it manifests the presence of God? How are we to absorb the great mystery of last week's Pentecost, which assures us that the Holy Spirit comes down upon us in tongues of fire to send us forth with hope for the world?

Indeed, Easter and Pentecost challenge us as followers of Christ to live out our faith more in darkness than in light. I think that's it. I think that faith is, indeed, ridiculous — that it is only for those who have truly fallen in love with God and been captured by the Spirit of Wisdom — She who is Fire and Breath and Wind, She who calls us to listen especially in the darkness. We know all about that. But even as we experience dark times in our world (and in our lives), we must be conscious of the light — not a lot — but intense enough to make a difference and reflect another reality. We are called to live with faith and hope.

We read about hope this week in Romans 5: "Suffering brings patience, patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings hope" — one of the gifts

of the Holy Spirit. Still, as always, being faithful in a world of suffering is a challenge and perhaps making sense out of it is, as Jesus says to his disciples in the Gospel of John, “too much for you now, but when the Spirit of truth comes, She will lead you into *all* truth.” Maybe that truth is all about hanging on with a ridiculous faith because we do not let go of that tiny but intense light that comes upon us in an on-going Pentecost.

I remember one particular experience of that ‘hanging-on with what seemed at times, ridiculous faith’. It was some time ago, when I was supporting a couple in the community who sporadically attended activities within the parish. James and Sarah (not their real names) were recovering alcoholics. There were times when they were sober, shy, earnest and full of hope for their future. And there were times when they were smelly, foul-mouthed, angry and disruptive.

Once, I took a very drunk Sarah home to James, late at night after post-quake drain-workers found her wandering on the road outside the church – luckily, I was onsite attending a choir concert and was helping clean up after supper. Another time, in the middle of the day, and the busyness of parish life, I needed to politely yet firmly indicate to both James and Sarah in their zombie-state that they couldn’t consume their paper-bagged meths on parish grounds, but were welcome to stay without it. They took themselves off to the footpath and sat there, outside the office – the parish remained a safe place to them, whether they were sober or otherwise. It was *hard* accompanying them through the mire of temptation and fall, seeing the threads of hope fraying as they clung to the temporary comfort of familiar yet such destructive addiction. It was of course, *much* harder for them.

But my last encounter with them, was when James called at the parish office and presented me with a beautiful, personally-crafted poster of the Serenity Prayer. He told me about the autobiography he had painstakingly typed one

finger at a time over recent months, and that his support-worker was helping him to publish. He was radiant (and in his radiance, so was I)!

Indeed, “perseverance brings hope.” We will hold on, even if, so often, it appears that we hold on to almost nothing. God's grace is more powerful than the deepest darkness. Suffering, pain, conflict, death...

So, what about us, today, in our damaged and conflicted world, living in a nation grappling with child poverty and child abuse, housing crises and homelessness, obesity, environmental damage, and a societal god called the free-market economy?

How do we proclaim and live out our faith and hope in the Triune God, embracing the peace we are promised and indeed have, through our Lord Jesus Christ, filled and guided by the Holy Spirit? Can we boast in *our* sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us?



Can we, like Lady Wisdom, stand at the crossroads, at the city gate, and in the doorways engaging with our communities, proclaiming the love that God has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, rejoicing in God's created world and recognising the divine spark within all humanity? Can we – with wisdom - sing God's song and dance a divine dance with the Godhead, knowing that they delight in us?