

## The Holy Trinity May 30, 2010

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31 ÷Wisdom Speaks÷

Christians take it for granted that there is one God in three persons, and three persons in one God. But this is not something that comes naturally to us. We can only know this relationship when we are taught, and the only trustworthy source for this teaching is God's Word. Churches that have split off from Christianity over the centuries have often done so over the relationship of the three persons ó Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ó and how they relate to God. But when we see the unity of the scripture in defining this relationship within the Godhead, then we are better prepared to take our own stand in faith on the unity in trinity and the trinity in unity. The Old Testament reading today puts before us the work of the three persons of the Holy Trinity by focusing particularly on the work of Jesus Christ, our Savior, but by remembering also the special work of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The Acts reading today clearly puts before us that there is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit. They are each spoken of as separate persons with separate work. So the Son is handed over to death on the cross, but God the Father raises him from the dead. Then Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit on the church after he receives the Spirit from the Father. Within this passage of scripture, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all mentioned, with the Father called God. But the Son is called ÷Lordö just as God the Father is called ÷Lord.ö This name Lord is the word that is used to translate God's name, Yahweh, in the Old Testament. So actually, Peter identifies God as both the Father and the Son. Other passages identify the Holy Spirit also as God. So it is clear that there is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all three are called God. But then from a passage in Deuteronomy that states that ÷the Lord our God is one,ö and in 1 John of Jesus that he is ÷the true God and eternal life,ö in the end we must conclude that there is only one God. Therefore, we can speak of the trinity in unity and the unity in trinity.

Another way we state this relationship is that there is ÷One God in Three Persons,ö or the ÷Three in One.ö I had an interesting email recently from someone who is possibly a very distant cousin in New Zealand. I had inquired of her about a family tree she has that might link to mine. There were several pastors of the Church of Ireland in this Irish family, and she had observed that I also was a pastor. She made the conclusion that this was a very spiritual family, and that she herself was very active in her Jehovah's Witness Church. I found myself biting my tongue at this juncture because I know that her understanding of the Holy Trinity is not the one that the Bible teaches us. Her church could agree that there is one God, Jehovah. However, it doesn't speak of God as being three persons within itself. Rather, to them Jesus was a god as much as we are. Such a belief that Jehovah's Witnesses have comes about when someone doubts the teaching of the Holy Trinity and begins to trust the heresy. However, we have come to believe what the Bible teaches about God. There is one God in three persons, or the three in one.

Finally, when it comes right down to it, we must conclude that the relationship of the divine persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the Godhead is a mystery to us. We cannot rationally explain or understand it, but we accept it by faith. We call it a Mystery. When the Bible uses the Word mystery, it is something that God is revealing or teaching us. For example, in Ephesians 3 Paul calls it a mystery of God that the Gentiles are included in God's plan of salvation, along with the Jewish believers. However, it never really was a mystery because even the Old Testament speaks about forgiveness of sins for both the Jew and the Gentile. In time people came to understand this wonderful plan of salvation is for all people without distinction of ethnic origin. So similarly, God teaches us about himself in the Bible that he is one God in three persons, so the mystery is revealed to us. For those who still struggle to understand, it is appropriately called a ÷mystery.ö

Now our text puts before us the name ÷Wisdom,ö who is personified as a real person of the Bible. Who is ÷Wisdomö according to Proverbs 8? The text gives us several clues, three in particular:

*“The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works,  
before his deeds of old.” (v. 22)*

*“I was formed long ages ago,  
at the very beginning, when the world came to be.” (v. 23)*

*“When there were no oceans, I was given birth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.” (v. 24)*

We know that Solomon wrote this book and was very wise. When he became king, he asked God to give him wisdom to rule the people of Israel. And God gave Solomon exceptional wisdom. In fact, God praised Solomon for asking for wisdom instead of riches or other earthly treasures. However, Solomon does not call himself wisdom. Rather, he speaks about someone else as the source, or substance, of wisdom. These Bible passages make it clear that ÷wisdomö existed before the world was created. Therefore, ÷wisdomö is not someone that came about after the six days of creation, but someone who existed before the creation. Solomon identifies ÷wisdomö with someone who was formed or begotten from eternity, which clearly refers to our Lord Jesus Christ!

Wisdom, or Jesus, came to ÷call outö God's message in Word and Deed. Consider first that Jesus came only to speak what God gave him to teach the people. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus puts before us God's expectations that we be perfect in our obedience of the 10 commandments. He says that when we do everything he teaches that we will be righteous before God. We must, in fact, be righteous before God. We must be ready to give someone else the shirt off our backs, watch our language, not seek greatness or

popularity for ourselves, must be content with what we have, never worry about tomorrow, and be perfect like God. When we have done all that God expects of us from the commandments, then we will find an open door to heaven.

We cannot of course achieve the perfection that God expects or that Jesus teaches us. So Jesus also calls out to us that the Kingdom of Heaven, which we desire to achieve and reach, cannot be reached by our own puny efforts. Rather, the Kingdom of Heaven comes to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He states that when we know and believe in him, then we will find God the Father and an open door to heaven. We cannot know God the Father unless we first know and accept Jesus Christ, His Son.

Therefore, Jesus' calling out God's message also includes the very works that God sent him to do. Jesus puts before us the necessity of his own suffering because of our sins, and in fulfillment of his words he was arrested by his enemies and physically and emotionally abused by them. He taught the people that he must be lifted up and die, and in fulfillment of his words Jesus was lifted up on the cross where he became our substitute as a sacrifice for the world's sins. He received the wrath of God that we deserve, and when his time on the cross was completed as our substitute, he died and was buried. He also taught the people that he would rise from the dead, and on several occasions he showed that he had power to overcome death when he raised up others, like Lazarus, from death. And so on the third day after Jesus' death, he rose again from the dead.

Wisdom calls out to us to put our trust in Jesus Christ, our Savior over sin, death and the devil. Wisdom calls out to the world to believe that he is their Savior.

But unfortunately, there are many choices in life that call for our allegiance. Many choices come to us with different voices and to follow different paths.

What voices in life are you hearing? Jesus calls to us from the wisdom of the Bible, but at the same time we face many other choices in life. In some choices there is neither right nor wrong in the decision we make. For example, we have some choices in middle and high school as to what classes we will take. We can choose to go on to college after high school or pursue a career. We have choices of majors in college. We can make decisions as to which job to take, where to live, who to marry. We have many choices in life where there is no right or wrong decision.

There are other voices putting choices before us every day in which we must make a decision as to right and wrong. These voices put before us temptations that seek to lead us away from God and our Lord Jesus Christ. We have temptations that come to us from the devil, from people or things around us in the world, and from our own fallen, sinful nature against which we still struggle in life as Christians. These choices, or temptations, really are not choices for us when we seek to follow Christ and resist sin. But they are choices, nevertheless, that seek to lead us away from God.

The Holy Trinity has a plan for these times as well. First, the Holy Spirit works through the Word of Christ to guide us on the right path. There are different paths we can take in life, just as Solomon writes:

*"...where the paths meet, she takes her stand." (v. 2)*

We meet the wisdom of Christ at the crossroads, and we meet the Holy Spirit whom Christ has sent from the Father to help us to make the right decisions in life. When Jesus was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness before he began his public ministry and work, he relied on God's Word to help him resist sin. We have this same power available to us. God's Word, and the Holy Spirit's guidance with it, who helps us to stay on the right path of holiness. St. Peter writes in his second letter that we should seek to supplement our faith in Christ by pursuing obedience and acts of love and service toward others, which please God. We can choose to make good, God-pleasing decisions when we are tempted.

In addition to the encouragement we receive from the Holy Spirit through God's Word, we can remember that the Father desires that all people hear this message. We have a God who cares deeply about us and wants us to spend eternity with him. God is on our side and desires that all people be saved and follow his truth. God is actively working to bring us to heaven and eternal life.

Furthermore, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are working together as one to bring you home. We sometimes separate the work of each person of the Holy Trinity in order to understand God better, but the fact is that we cannot really divide God. God is one, and the three persons of the Holy Trinity always work in unity, and as one, to bring us to heaven and eternal life — beginning with God's creation, continuing with Christ's sacrifice, and then with the Holy Spirit delivering forgiveness and all God's spiritual gifts through the message of Jesus.

Finally, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rejoice as one in the results of God's work! You know the passages of the Bible that speak about the great joy in heaven when a sinner repents, or of the shepherd who finds the lost sheep and brings him home rejoicing. The Holy Trinity rejoices in you and will rejoice when we leave this life and cross over to heaven. You are the reason for God's joy!

On this Memorial Day weekend we give thanks for our veterans and the many servicepersons who gave their lives for this country and for our world. On this Holy Trinity Sunday, we also remember and give thanks for the united work God's doing for our salvation through the unity in trinity and the trinity in unity. You are dearly loved by and precious to God, and our triune God will not stop until you cross over from this shore through heaven's gates.

*soli deo gloria*