

eLectionary Readings Discussion for Sunday, May 30, 2010

A Ministry of Christ the Redeemer Church, San Marcos, Texas
First Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday

Remembering Pentecost?

This discussion is the opinion of Bert Cobb and is not necessarily the opinion of anyone else. Do not interpret these reflections to mean anything other than what Bert Cobb thinks and feels. They are for the exhortation, encouragement, and edification of the Saints and may be used freely for that purpose.

This week's Lectionary readings:

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Psalm 8 or Canticle 2 or 13

Romans 5:1-5

John 16:12-15

Dates are important as punctuations in our lives. We remember December 7, 1941, November 11, 1918, September 11, 2001, February 14, 2005, Pentecost and Passover circa 33 A.D., etc. What makes "a date" important to us? Why do we "remember" Pentecost? What do we remember about Pentecost? The Ecclesiastical "season" from now until Advent is called "The Season after Pentecost". The Lectionary gets looser in its regimentation as we "take the summer off" from the hard grind of the seasons from Advent to Pentecost. Many of the "readings" are optional and tend to wander about the Bible. Often, it will be hard for me to find the "thread" that binds these scriptures into a tapestry of understanding. As you read the passages, try to find the apocryphal themes each week (apocryphal means "hidden"). Good hunting and enjoy this time of "freedom". If you like "word searches" and puzzles, you will find these passages "interesting".

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Does not wisdom call,

and does not understanding raise her voice?

On the heights, beside the way,

at the crossroads she takes her stand;

beside the gates in front of the town,

at the entrance of the portals she cries out:

"To you, O people, I call,

and my cry is to all that live.

The LORD created me at the beginning of his work,

the first of his acts of long ago.

Ages ago I was set up,

at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

When there were no depths I was brought forth,

when there were no springs abounding with water.

Before the mountains had been shaped,

before the hills, I was brought forth--

*when he had not yet made earth and fields,
 or the world's first bits of soil.
 When he established the heavens, I was there,
 when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
 when he made firm the skies above,
 when he established the fountains of the deep,
 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
 so that the waters might not transgress his command,
 when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
 then I was beside him, like a master worker;
 and I was daily his delight,
 rejoicing before him always,
 rejoicing in his inhabited world
 and delighting in the human race."*

Anthropomorphism is the philosophical mechanism of giving human qualities to inanimate objects: ***"Does not WISDOM CALL?"*** Please note that "wisdom" and "understanding" are differentiated in this passage. The Book of Proverbs contains "wisdom statements" as though "wisdom" were speaking to each of the readers. When you read "Proverbs", whose voice speaks the words of wisdom in your mind? What does "wisdom" sound like? This making of "concepts" into a "creature" is not a new concept. We are all familiar with the cartoon characterization of "the devil" and an "angel" on our shoulders whispering into our ears wise words or harmful words. It is nothing more than the continuation of the "dualism" so prevalent in Eastern philosophy (The Bible is EASTERN theology so, get over it.)

Psalm 8 Page 592, BCP

Domine, Dominus noster =O Lord, OUR Lord..." (Governor is not a direct translation?)

1

**O LORD our Governor, *
how exalted is your Name in all the world!**

2

***Out of the mouths of infants and children *
 your majesty is praised above the heavens.***

3

***You have set up a stronghold against your adversaries, *
 to quell the enemy and the avenger.***

4

***When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, *
 the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,***

5

2

What is man that you should be mindful of him? *
the son of man that you should seek him out?

6

You have made him but little lower than the angels; *
you adorn him with glory and honor;

7

You give him mastery over the works of your hands; *
you put all things under his feet:

8

All sheep and oxen, *
even the wild beasts of the field,

9

The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, *
and whatsoever walks in the paths of the sea.

10

O LORD our Governor, *
how exalted is your Name in all the world!

There are several “quote lines” from this Psalm 8 passage which are often included in sermons and songs. It ascribes to mankind the responsibility of being “master” of God’s creation? Tell that to the “greenies” who might have a disagreement about what “master” entails. A “good master” would never abuse the position and “lord it over” the ones over which they are “masters”. Mankind was given “dominion” (same root word as “Dominus”, God) over the “creation” to care for it and to “husband” it. No one who understands this magnificent responsibility would ever abuse “creation” or be “wasteful” of what God has “created”, be it man, beast, natural resources, air or water? Wisdom comes into the picture when we are given “dominion” over creation. A little “wisdom” and “discernment” would answer a lot of the heated discussions going on around us, wouldn’t it? Was mankind created “a little lower than the angels”? What does that mean to you? Mankind created nothing of our “created world” so we cannot claim to be masters of any “creation”. Mankind merely USES what God created, rearranges the “building blocks” and “invents” some other use of what was always present? The psalmist proclaims mankind as “masters of creation” BUT is that the truth? Did God give you and me “mastery” and “dominion” over God’s creation? Perhaps we should pray for WISDOM and DISCERNMENT to wisely act as “caretakers” and “masters” of God’s creation? With “dominion” comes the grave responsibility to USE the creation for GOOD. These are always the moral questions that face us as “inventors” of “new uses” for any of God’s creation. God made the atom which we can use for either good or harm. God gave us speech which can also be used for GOOD or harm. Can you think of any other examples of this duality of usage?

Romans 5:1-5

SINCE we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

What is the “biblical” definition of “justified”? Paul trained “at the feet of Gamaliel”, a leading member of the Sanhedrin, the “Supreme Court” of Israel therefore, Paul was very familiar with courtroom proceedings and terminology. We know, in a court of law, that “extenuating circumstances” are often cited to explain our actions or to “justify” our unlawful acts. Was Paul’s persecution of the early Church “justified” through the grace of God he received through his FAITH in Christ? Is there anything for which WE need “justification”? I’m NOT talking about “excuses” which are often confused with “reasons”. We all want JUSTICE until we get taken to court as the GUILTY party, don’t we? Once taken to court, we desire MERCY more than JUSTICE. Our worldly “attorney” will nearly always want us to plead “NOT guilty” but, are we? (WE often attempt to “plea bargain” with God by making vain promises, don’t we?) ***“ALL have SINNED and fallen short of the glory of God.”*** “Justification” assumes admission of guilt and THEN “justice” being meted to the law-breaker? I assume that WE KNOW that we are included in that “ALL” who have sinned? God KNOWS of our guilt. All that is left is to admit our culpability and sinfulness (confess to God). The second portion of this passage is a moral path from “guilty” to “not guilty” based on FAITH: ***“... we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”*** IF we have the Holy Spirit as our attorney (advocate), we know we can “get off” from any charge? Is “justified” another word for “forgiven”? Is “justified” another word for “redeemed”? Is “justified” another word for “saved”? Word meaning is often colored by the context in which the word is used. The “SINCE”, which begins this logical progression, infers that Paul has already proven his point that “we are justified by faith”. The “SINCE” is a “linking word” in logic and in debate. Paul is “debating” the duality of being “guilty” versus “justified”. Paul assumes that we have FAITH and are, therefore, “justified”. Being “justified” is the path to “peace with God” through our FAITH in God? Again, what is YOUR definition of “justified”? Words and their definitions are VERY important in our progression from sin to salvation. What is our ATTITUDE toward “justification”? The passage that changed the world for Martin Luther was **“By GRACE are you saved. It is the free GIFT of God.”** Grace is God’s “love offering” to his Creation. Understanding of that passage will change OUR world as well.

John 16:12-15

Jesus said to the disciples, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

John assumes that the reader will understand his "logic" as recorded and as stated by Jesus in this passage. It is the classic A + B + C = D schema of "logic". A=The Holy Spirit is coming to guide you into all the truth + B=The Holy Spirit will only confirm what I have already tried to tell you + C=All that God has also belongs to Jesus = D (The **Holy Spirit** will glorify **Jesus** and **God** by A + B + C). This is another passage that "infers" the existence of the "Trinity" by ownership and function. I hope this helps you understand the convoluted logic that is so hard to put into words. Remember that John wrote down these words LONG after the time in which it occurred. The words seem to put the Holy Spirit "lower" in stature than Jesus, don't they? What ever happened to "equality of the Trinity"?

Alright, what is the "thread" that binds together these four passages of scripture? Have you found it yet? Please recall that this is the "Season AFTER Pentecost" and that the Holy Spirit was active in the Hebrew Bible as well as in the New Testament. Is the "Wisdom calling" from Proverbs the Holy Spirit teaching us (note the use of the pronoun "her")? Did the psalmist acknowledge that we were given "dominion" over Creation to use the "wisdom and discernment" we would learn from the Holy Spirit? Is the "attorney" in Romans, who pleads our "case" that "justifies" us, the Holy Spirit? Is the "proclaimer" and "teacher" in John's gospel the Holy Spirit? Did the folks who collated the Lectionary series want to describe and explain the "functions" of the Holy Spirit to us? Is this why we ought "remember" Pentecost?