

Year C Trinity Sunday  
Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31  
Psalm 8  
Romans 5:1-5  
John 16:12-15  
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When Liane, our middle child was born, she was the first girl to be born in my husband's large family in 65 years. Chet was one of five boys, his older brother had three boys his younger brother had two sons and our first born was a boy so when Liane was born she achieved instant stardom. The world was her oyster. As a church baby she was also doted on by her large church family. She was a happy, loving child for whom life was a source of delight. It was only after entering elementary school when she began to be exposed to the cruelty of others who would try to steal away her joy and erode her confidence that she would have any doubts about her sense of self-worth. In the face of the cruelty of the world, knowing the love of God for her in Jesus Christ, and the love of her family were life lines for a growing girl.

In the story that is told in "The Help", the little girl Mae Mobley is largely ignored and neglected by her parents, an unspoken message being communicated to her that she is unlovable, unworthy of their attention, and of no value. It is only

the maid, Aibileen, who cares for her every day who speaks into her heart words to counteract the unloving, devaluing treatment by her parents. Aibileen speaks over her repeatedly to imprint on her heart and in her mind the words, "You is smart, you is kind, you is important." Whatever they may have lacked in grammar they made up for 100 fold in value for this little child. Those words of affirmation would guard her heart against the lies of the enemy that would come creeping in as self-doubt and even self-loathing in the absence of the love of her parents. When Aibileen is unjustly fired what is so heart wrenching is that this young child is being left alone without anyone to love her and speak these words of loving affirmation into her heart. Aibileen was her one hope of remaining whole in a family that didn't seem to know how to love her and now she was going away.

Our gospel reading today is the end of Jesus' farewell discourse to the disciples. He is leaving them with an enormously difficult task of reaching a hostile world with the message of the gospel, of God's

redeeming love for his people. The disciples are in desperate need of encouragement to get them through what lies ahead. Jesus has told them he will be leaving them and they are scared to death about how they will function without him. He tells them it is actually for their good that he is leaving. In saying that he must go away for the Holy Spirit to come, he is not implying that the two persons of the Godhead can't be co-present. The unity of the Trinity means that all three are always co-present. Rather it is through his "going away" in his death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension to the Father, that the work of salvation will be accomplished, a necessary precedent for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will not only proclaim the coming of the Kingdom (or empower them to proclaim it) but will actually impart it. The ministry of the Spirit is the unleashing of that resurrection power of the promised kingdom of God in the world. But it's only on the other side of the resurrection after receiving the Holy Spirit that the disciples will even be capable of gaining this understanding.

The disciples are to be proclaiming the Kingdom of God to restore the world to the state of right relationship with God where justice, peace, and blessing are upon all people. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that establishes the Kingdom of God by transforming hearts and lives

with the Gospel. The disciples are called to preach the love of God and his grace and mercy poured out for us in Jesus Christ. They are not called to preach judgment. That is the job of the Holy Spirit, who convicts us of sin and summons us to repentance. The Spirit reminds us of all that Jesus has taught, implanting the truth of God and of His Word on our hearts and leading us into all truth. The Holy Spirit protects us from discouragement, encourages us, and fills us with the love of our heavenly Father, inspiring us and empowering us to do the work He has given us to do. Through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, we experience healing of body, mind, and spirit for ourselves and are instruments of that healing for others.

The prophet Joel prophesied long before Pentecost, long before the coming of Christ, what the Lord would do in his people through the coming of the Holy Spirit when he said, "Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten; the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust."

The locust represent the impact of this fallen world on us and the lies about us that the enemy would have us believe; lies that say we have no value, that we are unloved, or that we have no hope for the future. Lies we believe about ourselves, hurtful words or actions that eat away at our

self- image, stripping us of our sense of self-worth as they creep into our thoughts and gnaw away at our confidence and our hearts. These cruel words and actions that are spoken over us or done to us are the work of the swarming locust. When the Lord says he will make up or restore to us for the years the swarming locust has eaten the word translated make up or restore is Shalam. It means to be whole or sound, to be safe, to be uninjured, made secure, to be peaceful, to live in harmony with God. Its principle meaning is completion and fulfillment. In the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God is restoring us to the relationship we were meant to have with Him in creation; that close relationship with God that Jesus enjoyed with the Father, unbroken by the interference of sin. This is to be ours with the coming of the Holy Spirit who will take what was true of Jesus, the relationship he shared with God, and declare it to us.

Jesus said of the Spirit, "He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you." What Jesus possessed becomes ours through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit reveals to us the knowledge of the character of God. He reveals to us the same love of God that Jesus enjoyed. The Spirit speaks into our hearts and minds: "You are redeemed, restored, and forgiven, you are cherished and of great worth.

I delight in you." The Spirit reveals to us the fullness of Jesus' teaching, an understanding of his words and of the work of the cross and resurrection. That same power of God at work for restoration and healing that belonged to Jesus, are made known to us. We experience now in this life on earth through the work of the Spirit a foretaste of what we will experience fully in heaven when we come into the fullness of the presence of God for all eternity. The Holy Spirit is that still small voice guiding and directing our words and actions. Like Jesus, we will be vessels of the Holy Spirit and instruments of God's healing, redeeming work for all creation.

In John chapter 7, Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." By this He spoke of the Spirit, (John tells us) whom those who believed in Him were to receive; the Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified."

The word for "receive" in this promise to those who believe indicates continuous or repeated action. Once Jesus had been glorified in His ascension to the Father, the Holy Spirit came on the disciples at Pentecost. But this was not a one-time event. The coming of the Holy Spirit was to be a continuous action. They would receive the Holy

Spirit and continue to receive the Holy Spirit as would all who believe in Christ. The anointing and infilling of the Holy Spirit continues to encourage and empower us, and fill us with the love of God and the presence of Jesus Christ today again and again and again.

Our understanding of who we are, that we are indeed loved and cherished by God, that we are of great value and worth, are all spoken into our hearts through the Spirit reminding us of all that Jesus taught and leading us into all truth. The Holy Spirit is our assurance against the lies of the enemy have no place in us because God's love has been planted firmly in our hearts by His Spirit. It is His love within us that restores us to wholeness and gives us that quiet confidence that we dwell secure in the love of God who has given His Son for us and given us His Spirit as a guarantee. The Spirit shares not only the truth of Christ and of the Father but also Christ himself. Jesus himself is with us, among us, in the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit we go forth in response to His call on our lives not only for him but with him. Truly He is with us always to the close of the age.  
Amen.