**Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31 June 12, 2022**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Old Testament lesson, Proverbs chapter 8 here re-reading these words. “Then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of men.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Time. Our lives revolve around what time it is or what time something is going to start or end or much time we have to do something or even be here in this world. Our lives put a very strong emphasis on the time in which we live, our own history, on where we came from, on what it was like for our ancestors and what it will be like for our children and our children’s children. A way to capture a moment in time is to make a time capsule. So, if you were to make a time capsule today, what would you put into it? Why would you chose the items you did? And would anything of what we face in our world today be worth remembering?

What you would personally keep inside a time capsule can vary. Perhaps you’d put old photos, or a piece of technology. Maybe some old clothes or keepsakes. But what we would put collectively as a church into a time capsule would be different. What would we value? What would be timeless? What would we want to pass down to the later generations of our church?

A church in California, celebrated the 100th anniversary of its sanctuary and as part of the celebration, they opened the cornerstone of their church building and took out the time capsule placed there a century ago. In the capsule, among other things, they found a German Bible, a German hymnal, and a local newspaper. In these three things, you have a picture of God’s work among and through his people: the Word of God, the words of his people, and the words of the world.

There was the Word of God by which God proclaims the saving work of Jesus Christ and brings salvation to all people. There were the words of the people, their hymnbook, by which they give praise to God. And, along with the Word of God and the words of his people, they also had put the words of the world to get a snapshot in time of what was going on. While other areas may not still print and read newspapers we still have an appreciation for the printed news in our community today. You can still have a newspaper delivered to our homes and find local as well as national news in it. A newspaper gives a glimpse of the world out of which God calls his people and to which God sends his people as part of his saving mission.

With these small objects, those who laid the cornerstone offered a prayer for future generations, that they would continue in God’s mission. In this cornerstone was buried a prayer that people would hear the Word of God, proclaim that Word in their world, and lift up to God their songs of praise.

In our Old Testament Reading this morning, we do not have a time capsule with objects in it, but we do have a rare glimpse of what was there at the earth’s foundation. In our Old Testament Reading, we are given a glimpse of creation. Most of us are familiar with the account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2. The famous words that are read as someone picks up a bible for the first time and begins to understand how the world came to be. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Out of nothing, God brought all things into being.

What is beautiful about this text from Proverbs, however, is that we are offered a glimpse of something more when we hear the story of creation. We are given a glimpse of God before his work of creation. It’s a picture into the nature of the God that we serve, were created by and ultimately the God we rely upon in order to provide for this life, and for the life to come. And what we see there, from God before creation, is delight: God’s delight. Before the world began, God was rejoicing, and his delight begins the story of our salvation.

What was God delighting in? The text answers this for us with two verses 30-31. The Lord was delighting in Wisdom, and Wisdom was delighting in the people God made to inhabit the world. “Then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of men.”

The apostle Paul clarifies for us what this is all about. In writing to the Colossians, Paul testifies to Jesus. He says, “By him all things were created, in heaven and on earth” (Col 1:16). Before creation, Jesus was with God the Father, and all things were created through him. Thus, Jesus is this figure of Wisdom, the master workman who is with the Father before the world was created. The Father delighted in Jesus, and Jesus rejoiced before the Father. The world itself was created with exuberance and joy. Father, Son, and Spirit worked together to bring all things into being, and after the world was created, God called all things good. This is why this text appears on Holy Trinity Sunday, because the work of creation was the work of God, and we worship the triune God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We read together the words of the Athanasian Creed that help us understand what this doctrine of our Church means and doesn’t mean, but let us understand that all three members of the Trinity were involved in creation.

This delight, however, spreads from God to his creation. Jesus is seen “rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of men” (v 31). Before the world began, Jesus was filled with delight for all people and, after the fall into sin, Jesus held on to this original delight. Out of joy, Jesus came to save these people and to restore creation, which had been cursed because of human sin. This is an important distinction and understanding for us as Christians and followers of the Triune God. Jesus ultimately came to save us not out of obligation or coercion. He was not forced to die upon the cross and wasn’t a pawn in some grand scheme. He willingly gave up his life for you, which shows the depth of his love, and the love of the Trinity, because the Father willingly gives His son over to death, for you, his fallen creation.

If one were to go back to the foundation of the world and recover a time capsule, within the capsule one would have the delight of God. God the Father has delight in his Son, Jesus, and Jesus, God’s Son, has delight in all people. The story of our salvation begins with this delight of God.

God delights in us and we delight in him, but in our sin we delight in God only when it suits what we want out of him. Sometimes, people approach God as a momentary fix for a problem in life. They turn to God only when something is wrong. A divorce. A death. A disaster. And God is that temporary healer, that emergency plan, the plan B when things go wrong. God unfortunately becomes very small. It fits into this understanding of God as our Heavenly Father because we adopt the same mentality with our earthly parents and authorities in this life. For you parents out there, think about this, when do your kids come to you? When they have everything they want or need? Or do they come to you when they broke something, did something destructive or dangerous, or when they want something that they can’t get on their own? Now ask yourself this, have you ever done the same thing, with your parents? And finally, if we are honest with ourselves we see, we have done the same thing with God. We love to follow him as long as we can still do things our way. We come to Him only at the lowest points, when we have no other hope or plan. In sin, we reduce God. We make him fit our needs. Our sinful foolishness shows that we, the ones created by the all-powerful Triune God, attempt to take this immeasurable God, this vast, powerful, Divine essence in 3 persons and put Him nice and neat into our own little box to do with what we want. It is absurd and foolish and silly….but also dangerous, because we do not serve a God who is weak or moveable by human strength or emotions, we serve the Almighty God. A jealous God who loves His people and who will not tolerate sin.

Opening this time capsule from Proverbs, however, gives us a different vision of God. Forgiveness is not simply a momentary fix in our lives. It is part of a much larger story. It is part of God’s delight before the world began. God the Father delighted in Jesus, who was his master workman. Jesus formed us as creatures and found delight in us. After we fell into sin, God the Father still delighted in his Son. Why? Because Jesus chose to come, to die for your sin, and to rise for your salvation. By his death and resurrection, Jesus promises to bring you from this world into the new creation of God, where you will sing an everlasting song of praise.

This song from Proverbs teaches us to sing a song of praise. To give God thanks for his delight in Jesus Christ, who not only created us but also came in love to save us after we fell into sin.

When you read the Book of Proverbs, it is easy to think about us pursuing Wisdom. In the Book of Proverbs, we expect to encounter short proverbial sayings that will help us in discipleship. After studying another book of Solomon, the Song of Songs this Spring, it’s easy to get lost in the language of Solomon and lose the core message of his words. While it’s true that many aspects of proverbs talk about practical wisdom for a ruler or even just someone growing up and going out into the world, the main theme of Proverbs is about a true understanding of Wisdom and how it comes from God. Wisdom is finally understood as the fear of the Lord, a healthy awe of the power and divinity of God himself. Wisdom means that we learn all that we can, but it can also mean that at times in our lives we accept that we can’t possibly understand all the different aspects of something as profound as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Proverbs helps us understand that true nature of Wisdom and also teaches us how to walk in the ways of God.

What is amazing about this passage from Proverbs, however, is that we don’t come across words about us pursuing God. No. Instead, we come across words about God pursuing us. Wisdom goes to the crowded places, calls to all people, and sings of God’s delight. Before we ever pursue God, God pursues us. Before we ever delight in God, God already delights in us.

Thus, our salvation begins and ends with God’s delight.

I’m sure that we’re all familiar with Psalm 23. This famous Psalm of David speaking about the Lord as our shepherd. But do you remember how that psalm ends? At the end of Psalm 23, David looks to the future and says this about God: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (v 6). The word for “follow” means “pursue.” Because of Christ, God will pursue us with goodness and mercy all the days of our life.

This proverb takes us to the beginning of time to see God’s delight so we can faithfully look ahead to the end of time, knowing his love will pursue us all our days.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.