

Sermon – John 16:12-15; Romans 5:1-5, Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31
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 Grace Lutheran Church
 Holy Trinity – Year C
 15 June 2025

“Ponder Anew”

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. I spent this past week with 60 or so kids, plus a bunch of awesome youth and adult leaders, at our Vacation Bible School here at Grace. We journeyed to the Alaskan wilderness, learning that Jesus is our True North, that Jesus is the One who guides our way and leads us home. We talked repeatedly about the fact that when we feel hopeless and helpless, we can trust Jesus. Timely proclamation, indeed. On day one, our focus was pretty profound for VBS: *When we ponder, we can trust Jesus*. Our week began not with insisting upon a faith that demands certainty, but an invitation to a faith in which questions are okay, in which we begin by delightfully acknowledging that we don't have it all figured out. Monday's Bible Buddy was an otter named Ponder, so I brought a friend from home, Oskar the Otter. In my time with the kids during games, we would spend time taking turns holding Oskar, sharing our thoughts with each other. On this Holy Trinity Sunday, as I'm holding Oskar, I find myself pondering anew. I have questions. Questions about God, for sure: What does it mean to confess that God is triune, to say that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And questions about life, too, life in this broken world: Why do we live in a world in which there is enough money for an unnecessary military parade but not enough money to care for the poor among us? Why do we live in a world in which political violence, most recently demonstrated by assassinations and attempted murders in Minnesota, has become surprisingly unsurprising? And why do we live in a

world that always seems to be careening toward war instead of peace, as we watch Israel and Iran attack one another? Who, we might well ask, is God, and why is there such suffering in God's world?

2. Our confession of God as Trinity emerges not from abstract theologizing but from the lived witness and revelation of Jesus Christ in the midst of human suffering. In today's reading from John, again located in the Upper Room on the night before his death, Jesus speaks of God and God's purposes within this world. Rather than eschewing suffering and death, Jesus reveals himself as the Son, sent by the Father, to enter all the way into death, taking upon himself the sin, sorrow, and suffering of this world. And Jesus promises that this death will not be the end, but that upon his rising and ascending, the Son and the Father will together send the Holy Spirit, the One who will continue to lead us into all truth. Father, Son, and Spirit. These are not ways or modes in which a monolithic God engages with us, mere metaphors for the divine. They are the Three who are the dynamic One God, living and active, at work for our salvation. It is good to admit that this is all more than we can wrap our head around. In fact, a member of the Altar Guild asked if I'd brought Oskar today because the Trinity is "otterly incomprehensible." I'm reminded of the British astronomer Sir Arthur Eddington, who, when asked in the 1920s what it was like to be among the three people who actually understood Einstein's theory of general relativity, famously replied, "I'm trying to think who the third person is." And if it's true that the intricacies of the cosmos are beyond the grasp of most of us, how much more true is it that the mystery of the One, the Three-in-One, who created the cosmos is beyond our understanding. Perhaps, however, God is meant not so much to be understood as to be confessed, worshipped, and loved in return for all that God has done for us.
3. Today we bring our questions, our doubts, our laments into the holy presence of the One who hears. Our experience of God begins in our sin and

suffering, exactly where the Son meets us. In the cross, the full glory of God is revealed. In God's free choice to justify us by grace, as Paul writes, to raise us up from death into life, we are made whole and holy, invited into the dance of life and love that is the Trinity. Our questions come with us, and while we do not always find answers, we always find hope. And hope does not disappoint. God's Wisdom calls out to us, her voice inviting us into God's presence, into the life of the God who delights in us even in this broken world; the God who beckons us into new life, abundant and eternal, with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – One God.

4. Today, we stand once more in the presence of the Holy One. This God continues to set us free and forgive us. This God reminds us that, while it is not for us to have answers to all of our questions, we are called to be part of the answer. We are called to witness to the God who stands not on displays of military power or upon acts of violence or war, but upon the promise of peace. A peace that for which we are called to work, however elusive it may be. A peace that emerges from the triune identity of God. Go forth, friends, in hope, holding on to the promises of the One who is holding on to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As our kids can tell you, this God is True North, with power for you when you feel helpless or hopeless, who will continue to walk with you every step of the way, who will always lead you home. Amen.

And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.