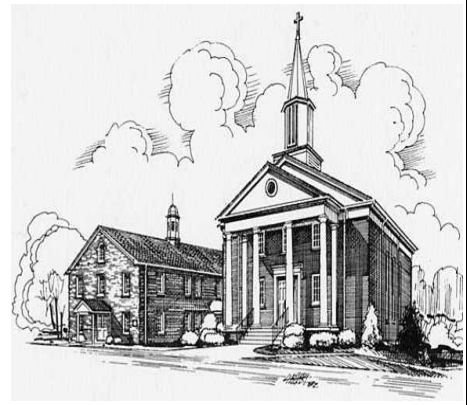


# The Lessons Appointed for Use on the

## First Sunday after Pentecost: Trinity Sunday

Year C  
RCL



- Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31
- John 16:12-15
- Psalm 8

### The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us  
your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to  
acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the  
power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity:  
Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us  
at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Fa-  
ther; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and  
reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **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.”

## Psalm 8

Domine, Dominus noster

- 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 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!

## **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.”

## **SERMON**

What sort of world do you live in? Is it a deterministic world where every effect has a discernible cause, a world which has no meaning beyond its own existence? Or do you live within a world fertile with meaning, a world which invites you to align yourself with its very structure? That was the discussion this week at lunch with a friend. I've made it a policy to cultivate friendships with people smarter than I am and this friend is certainly that. He had much to say about how we conceive of the world in which we live. I want you to think about the two sorts of worlds he was describing as I tell you the tale of how I came to find this sermon. After I do, ask yourself again what sort of world you live in. Here's how it happened:

I begin my week by reading the text for next Sunday. I read it slowly and with concentration, and, usual-

ly, a thought of a sermon direction will come to me. This last week....nothing. Well, that happens sometimes. Not last Monday, though. I got bupkis. None of the texts spoke to me. I was living in an empty world, devoid of meaning. I put thoughts of the sermon aside and tended to errands that needed doing.

As it happened, I drove past the construction on US 52 in Ohio. To clear up that huge rock slide, they are using gigantic baskets made of rebar and filled with soil which will, I think, become a barrier to further rock slides hitting the roadway. That's the way they build bridge pilings, too. First, a cage of rebar is built and placed, then concrete is poured around it. Apparently, concrete by itself isn't sufficiently strong and the internal structure of rebar is needed to keep the whole thing from falling down. Since the next thing I did was to drive across the bridge, supported by that same concrete



and rebar, I was pretty happy that someone had thought the whole thing through, but I also realized that I never think about that hidden structure that was supporting me. My very life depends on it, but I never give it a moment's thought. What if life, the universe and just everything also has an internal structure which supports and sustains it?

I had sort of a vague notion that I might have found a sermon – something about God supporting us. I got the surprise of the week, though, when I pulled into the Chapel of St. Arbuck for breakfast later in the week. Lo and behold the truck parked next to my car announced that it was being driven by a Bridge Inspector. What are the odds? I had been thinking about the internal structure of bridges, and here is a bridge inspector. I was born at night, but it wasn't last night. I rushed inside, introduced myself and asked him to tell me about

bridge inspections. I thought this was the place where I could tie my ideas about rebar in to the sermon I still needed to find, but no. To my surprise, he went all preacher on me.

“Bridge inspection is like reading the Bible”, he told me. “Both have to be done with intentionality. The crack that brought down the Silver Bridge was less than 1/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch wide. If you had looked at that bar without special testing, you would not have seen the crack. When it went, it put more stress on the next bar and the next and each failed until the whole bridge fell. If you read the Bible superficially you’ll miss something important until your whole faith will come crashing down the first time you are stressed.”

Can you believe it? Every turn I made, the world and the people and things in it were bringing me my sermon! What sort of world do you live in – one which

would explain away this remarkable series of events as just random, meaningless coincidence, or one in which the very structure of the world, the sustaining rebar holding it up, spoke through these events to bring me this sermon? What is the reality of this situation?

Today is Trinity Sunday. Trinity Sunday doesn't honor an event, like Christmas or Easter, but a reality: the Holy Trinity. We seem to have a bit of trouble with that word, "reality". We imagine that we live in the "real" world, and God lives up there in heaven, from whence he comes to judge the quick and the dead. We see the world and heaven as two disconnected things, but that's like trying to take the rebar out of the bridge structure, thinking you can still drive over the bridge. First of all, you haven't the power to do that. Secondly, the bridge would fall down if you did. If we think of ourselves as living in "reality" while God presides over

something else, we have made a great mistake. Was my remarkable week “reality” or something else?

The reality of my week was that I was tasked with coming up with a Trinity Sunday sermon. I wasn't doing very well, but then I was shown some construction in Ohio which revealed hidden structure to me. That vision of hidden structure made me think about the possibility of describing our world as having a hidden structure which supports it even though we are rarely aware of it. Then I thought about bridges being supported by hidden rebar and drove across that bridge to a completely unexpected meeting with, of all things, a bridge inspector with a gift for preaching. What are the odds?

Just as with my initial question about what sort of world you live within, there are two explanations that occur to me to explain this series of events. One explanation is that it is all coincidence, random acts that just

came together. The other explanation is that there is a hidden structure to life, the universe and just everything which brought these events together to help me find this sermon. Two fundamentally different explanations!

My lunch meeting with my smart friend was the final piece of this remarkable week because he helped me find the language I need to talk about the worlds we think we live within. He told me that there are two strands of thought informing contemporary western culture. One strand is that of the hero. The hero acts through his courage and character to bring meaning to a meaningless world. The other strand is that of the saint. The saint strives to identify the world's essence and bring it to human awareness. The hero imposes meaning on a meaningless world. The saint brings the fullness of God's creation to the attention of all humanity. Which sort of world do we think we live in – a pointless

world which finds meaning only through human effort and accomplishment, or a transcendent world whose structure has existed from all time, and which, if we will pay attention and align ourselves with it, will grant us a blessing?

For most of humanity, the twin bridges over the Ohio River provide a safe, convenient and comfortable way across the river. They glide from Kentucky to Ohio and back so effortlessly that they never have a thought for the structure underneath.

By contrast, the bridge inspector views the bridge through much different eyes. The bridge inspector is always aware of the structure, no matter how smooth the roadway, and is committed to the care of the bridge first and foremost.

I don't want to push this analogy beyond reason, but

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.

The bridge inspector spends his life with the spirit of truth. He knows of structure. He knows that a failure of even a single I-bar can bring down the entire bridge, so he treats each I-bar, no matter how trivial or inconsequential, with love and respect. The bridge inspector is committed to the welfare of every rivet, every bar, every bit of roadway. The bridge inspector, because of what he knows, views the bridge through the eyes of love.

I don't want you to leave here thinking I am telling you that God is everything. That just leads to wandering around behind the bushes worshiping lightning bugs.

What I do want to encourage you to think about is that God has granted His creation a structure to which we can align ourselves, and has given it into our care. It is an enormous responsibility to live in God's world like the bridge inspector does, viewing each piece of it with love and concern, but that is what we are called to do.

AMEN



## BENEDICTION

My smart friend has an even smarter wife. This week, she posted a review of a book titled “The Book of Awesome”, remarking

**Quick — what does the cool side of the pillow have in common with finding money in a coat pocket?**

**They both rank among the little things in life that bring us the most joy. Sure, the major milestones leave their marks. How often do they occur, though? And what sustains us in between those times?**

She suggests that when things break our way, it is wise to pay attention. I agree. Our understanding of our relationship with God is one based on love. You are loved. I am loved. The world in which we live isn't a hollow meaningless coincidence. It has a structure and that structure is love. The bridge inspector knows this and responds in kind. Be a good bridge inspector.

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*Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.*

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