

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31 Where the Paths Meet
June 15, 2025

On the Illinois River about forty miles north of St. Louis, there is a park named after the Jesuit explorer Jacques Marquette, who was the first European to experience, the place where the great rivers meet in the middle of the North America; the Mississippi, the Missouri, and the Illinois. It is called Pere Marquette State Park.

There is camping and horseback riding, and a grand lodge with fire places in which you could fit a small kitchen. There is a game of chess on the floor played with human-sized pieces. There is a well-known restaurant. People make the drive along the bluffs on Sunday afternoons to dine there. If you ever have the chance, visit.

There are hiking trails that lead to a bluff on the top of which there is a view from which on a clear day one can see the Arch in downtown St. Louis. There are three paths that all meet at the top along with a fourth that makes its way to and from the back end of the park, and on weekends in the fall and other times of the year when nature's beauty is in full blessing, one can always find a gathering where the paths come together, like the rivers down below. More than once I have run into someone I know, or just someone who wants to chat.

There is a lot on our minds as we gather for worship on this peaceful summer day. In addition to the news,

which always serves as a backdrop for our lives; there are personal concerns that can at times seem overwhelming. Each week we are called to step out of our lives and the life of the world just for an hour or so, and consider the things of God.

The texts we have read this morning from the psalter and the epistle offer much to give substance to these considerations.

"When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?"

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is also, in the church year scheme of things, Trinity Sunday; and it is Father's Day. Even if we are successful at setting aside our worldly concerns for an hour or so, there is still a lot on our minds; the One Great Hour of Sharing.

Let me add to it. The Old Testament reading for the day is from the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is not often read, either in worship or in personal devotion. For some of us it functions only barely as if it is in the Bible. Since it is one of the texts for the day, it seems right to give it some attention.

The reading is from the 8th chapter, and there is a line in it that caught my attention. In the reading, personified wisdom speaks, and I would like to offer it, along with all the other things, as an appropriate item for reflection, and hope it will not add excessively to the clutter. The chapter begins;

“Does not wisdom call out?
Does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights along the way, where *the paths meet*,
she takes her stand.

Beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she cries aloud, ‘to you, O men, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind.’” Proverbs 8:1-4

Life is a meeting with God and with people. For some this may be experienced as trouble, for others it is almost a relief; perhaps it is both. To all, in the end, it is Good News.

People experience these encounters in a variety of ways; the contemplation of nature, like in the reading from the psalter which envisions the universe on such a grand scale that humanity is small before it; or perhaps the birth of a child, the experience of having a lifelong friend, even the struggle with the painful side of life, for God meets us there.

It happens in the context of family, or in meaningful work, or in an educational setting where something is learned, or reading a book or some other form of expressive art that stirs the soul because someone has put their soul into it, told the truth about their lives

in a way that resonates even if no words are used. . . music. It might even happen in church. It is first, a meeting with God.

Wisdom calls us not to reject or turn away from this encounter, nor to ignore it, to live as if it hasn’t happened, or as though the implications of its message are meaningless. Proverbs tells us that the truest understanding and most important and meaningful experiences happen *where the paths meet, and wisdom takes her stand.* Pay attention.

The epistle reading makes a statement that the result of God’s action in Christ is that *we have peace with God.* Peace with God changes life. It generates meaning. It leads to goodness, and to a heightened experience of life’s wonder and beauty. It brings graciousness and mercy to bear in all our relations. *It redeems suffering* so that Paul actually glories in it.

This means that we do not fear a meeting with God. It is not a threat. As the theologian Karl Barth put it, “it is not an annihilation, it is an establishment.” It is grace. It is the making known of our truest selves. It does not destroy, but *gives* life, shapes our lives and develops perseverance and character and hope. It does not create the possibility of peace with God, but proclaims it as a present reality.

And secondly, it is a meeting with each other, and everyone who shares this life with us. It overcomes fear, the anxiety of the encounter, it tells us that the

people we meet are not adversaries but friends if we are willing to listen.

In the eighth chapter of Proverbs, wisdom gives no hint of the substance of its message, only to claim its place with God from the beginning of all things. The substance is played out over a lifetime, and is revealed in a series of short little one liners, such as;

29:1 He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.

4:23 Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life.

15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

15:28 The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words.

9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge God, and he will direct your path.

Not only Proverbs but all of the Bible gives us a vocabulary of wisdom and faith. We use words like love and compassion, mercy and grace, we think in

terms of respect, dignity, and integrity and the like, because we believe in God’s faithfulness.

Because we are met here at the crossroads where God and people meet. To think of life as meeting points us in the direction of relationship rather than accomplishment or power or success or being right about everything. It is the reason why the Great Commandment is to love, and not to know.

It has been shown to us in the reality behind the gospel story, that Jesus is God’s very substance, and that God’s very nature, and approach to us is acted out in Creation, in Cross and Resurrection, and in Real Presence, felt no more powerfully than where the paths meet and wisdom takes her stand.

[Back](#)

[Home](#)