

## Proverbs 8: 1-4, 22-31

<sup>1</sup>Does not wisdom call,  
and does not understanding raise her voice?  
<sup>2</sup>On the heights, beside the way,  
at the crossroads she takes her stand;  
<sup>3</sup>beside the gates in front of the town,  
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:  
<sup>4</sup>'To you, O people, I call,  
and my cry is to all that live.  
<sup>22</sup>The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,  
the first of his acts of long ago.  
<sup>23</sup>Ages ago I was set up,  
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.  
<sup>24</sup>When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.  
<sup>25</sup>Before the mountains had been shaped,  
before the hills, I was brought forth—  
<sup>26</sup>when he had not yet made earth and fields,  
or the world's first bits of soil.  
<sup>27</sup>When he established the heavens, I was there,  
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
<sup>28</sup>when he made firm the skies above,  
when he established the fountains of the deep,  
<sup>29</sup>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,  
<sup>30</sup>then I was beside him, like a master worker;  
and I was daily his delight,  
rejoicing before him always,  
<sup>31</sup>rejoicing in his inhabited world  
and delighting in the human race.

## PSALM 8

Leader: O Lord, our Lord,

**People: how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

Leader: Your glory is chanted above the heavens by the mouths of babes and infants.

**People: You have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.**

Leader: When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,

**People: the moon and the stars that you have established;**

Leader: what are human beings that you are mindful of them,

**People: and mortals that you care for them?**

Leader: Yet you have made them a little lower than God,

**People: and crowned them with glory and honor.**

Leader: You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;

**People: you have put all things under their feet,**

Leader: all sheep and oxen,

**People: and also the beasts of the field,**

Leader: the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,

**People: whatever passes along the paths of the seas.**

Leader: O Lord, our Sovereign,

**People: how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

### **John 16:12-15**

12 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup>All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

### **Perfect Peace Through Perfect Justice**

Have you ever sat around a family dinner table when no one has said a word? And it's not because everyone's eating? It's a common occurrence, especially when you have teenagers sitting at the table. Perhaps they don't even want to be at the table to begin with. Everything may look very peaceful, but is it really? What is not being said at that dinner table, and if those words were spoken what would happen?

Today I want to talk to you about perfect peace and perfect justice. The silence that settles around the dinner table that I just described is usually not peace at all but repressed anger or frustration. I remember as a young teenager I liked to wear my hair long, and all my father had to say to me at the dinner table was "You need a haircut" and I was mute for the rest of the meal. Why? Because my father's word always prevailed, and I knew that the clock was ticking; I would need to get a haircut in a matter of weeks or my dad would get angry and insist that I get a haircut.

That's the dilemma of being a teenager; you're not an adult but you want all the privileges of being an adult. I thought I should have the right to wear my hair the way I wanted to wear it, to wear the clothes that I chose to wear. Sometimes I thought it should be my right not to go to school.

Perhaps you think that I was unreasonable for expecting to have such rights, but sometimes we *should* expect more rights, and to be denied those rights robs us of our peace. True peace and justice are inextricably linked; you can't have true peace without true justice. In Jesus' day, the Roman Empire imposed a sort of peace (it was called the Pax Romana) over its subjects; follow Roman laws and you will have peace. They would invade and conquer a place, tell the leaders they were under Roman "protection," order them to pay taxes and do whatever else Rome wanted them to do, and in return the soldiers would let the people live. Some people may have actually benefitted from Roman peace, but does that mean that the system was just? Roman citizens had privileges that other people didn't have. Was that fair? Not at all, but as long as the Romans were in power, they made the rules.

Well it's been a long time since the Roman Empire, but there are still empires that subjugate people unfairly in order to maintain advantage over others, to maintain power and dominion. And there are ways that people subjugate others here in the United States, the land of the free and home of the brave. We've come a long way since the days of slavery, since the days that women were denied the right to vote, but people still try to (and succeed in) exerting power over others by discriminating against them. Organized religion, even the church is guilty of such practices, a rather sad testament to those who claim Jesus as their Lord.

Jesus was not one to exercise a lot of power over anyone except some demons. He was called “Lord” and “Master” by his disciples but he preferred to refer to them as “friends.” Even when he was arrested and unjustly condemned to death, he didn’t put up a fight to save his own life. *But he did show his solidarity with the poor, the neglected, the oppressed, the disenfranchised.* He touched those unclean lepers, and allowed a hemorrhaging woman to touch him (a rabbi!) in public! He took his ministry into enemy territory (Samaria!). He dined with sinners and tax collectors! And he declared that God’s kingdom was here!

Now some Christians today define the Kingdom as something that is merely in their hearts; the world goes to hell around them, but they’re “at peace” and content to endure the corruption and chaos that may exist around them. But is that a true peace? It can’t be! Why can’t it be? Because the Holy Spirit is alive and active in you, transforming you into an ever more loving person, and as your love grows, you start acting more and more like Jesus, speaking up for those who are treated unjustly. You can’t just close your eyes, or change the channel. The Spirit prompts you to act, to build God’s kingdom of perfect peace which requires perfect justice as well, because as long as others are suffering from injustice you will not find peace in yourself.

So what is the Holy Spirit saying to you? What is it prompting you to do? And what is it prompting us as a church to do? We are involved in many different ministries to many different people, but are there other ways, or better ways, that we can use our voice and other resources to end injustice and help bring in God’s kingdom? Today is Peace with Justice Sunday. I challenge you today, and I’ll be challenging you over the next five weeks to identify ways that we can end injustices we see in our midst. Some injustice is easy to identify; discriminatory lending practices or denying people employment or services based upon their gender identity. Some injustice is more complicated to identify – sometimes it has layers of issues and long chain of causes, for example buying a shirt in the mall that may have been assembled by slave laborers – it doesn’t say that on the tag, and no one but the slave driver may know it, but it’s our duty to ask questions and not turn a blind eye IF we desire to follow Jesus Christ. In this Season of Pentecost may the Holy Spirit open your eyes to the justice needs around us that we may be able to bring about a better peace than the peace we currently enjoy. Amen.