

**Opening Prayer**

**Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit that, as the Scriptures are read and discussed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.**

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

<sup>8:1</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>8:22</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.

**Commentary**

Some scholars attest that Wisdom is a poetic way of describing the wisdom of God; others think the divine attribute of wisdom has become a separate entity, like an angelic power. Proverbs 8 shows wisdom with female attributes in service to the divine initiative of creation—present during the process of creation, participating as a master worker, pleasing the Creator and enjoying human beings as they emerged. She determines cosmic order and is the prior condition for the existence of functioning of all things. Wisdom is described as a female prophet or street teacher who appears at the crossroads and the city gates where men did business, settled disputes, arranged marriages, and obtained justice. She calls to young men to learn from her. According to Wisdom Literature, salvation does not come through grace and forgiveness, but through making wise choices. Those who succumb to the temptations of folly will only find ruin in their lives.

## **Reflection**

Wisdom calls to humanity to understand the deepest ways of the universe and to exercise common sense in decisions and actions. How does Wisdom guide you in your life?

## **Romans 5:1-5**

<sup>5:1</sup> Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

## **Commentary**

The Roman house churches mirrored a tension that existed in Christianity at the end of Paul's ministry. Paul spoke to that tension. To Gentile Christians in Rome, he explained how he understood the continuing validity of the Abrahamic tradition and of Jewish law in God's purpose. To Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, Paul would defend the validity of the Gentile church by expounding on God's impartiality and on Jewish and Gentile equality as heirs of God's grace and salvation. In defending each side, Paul risked being misunderstood by both. Romans reflects his struggles with a weighty but practical matter: How might both sides learn a larger truth about the way(s) to reconciliation with God? Paul wrote that since they had faith in Christ, they could have peace with God. The overcoming of separation from God provides them access to God's grace—undeserved acceptance and forgiveness.

## **Reflection**

When have you found hope through pain, misfortune or failure?

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

<sup>16:12</sup> "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."

## Commentary

The great hymn “Once to Every Man and Nation” says, “New occasions teach new duties, / Time makes ancient good uncouth; / they must upward still and onward, / Who would keep abreast of truth.” Jesus and John claim that new occasions bring new understandings of God’s truth. As our lives and our world change over the centuries, the circumstances we face are very different from those the disciples confronted. But we are promised that the Spirit will guide us beyond what Jesus could teach in the first century. God’s gift of the Spirit in our lives ensures that Jesus’ words are not locked in the past, restricted to an historical moment. The promise of 16:13 is that each new generation can receive fresh insight into God’s truth appropriate to its situations. Through the Spirit, God remains with us and offers us new interpretations of God’s life-giving message and revelation.

## Reflection

Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide us to new truth as we needed it. How has the Spirit helped your faith to grow with the acceptance of new truth? Give examples.

## Responsive Psalter

## Psalm 8

- 8:1 O LORD, our Sovereign,  
**how majestic is your name in all the earth!**  
You have set your glory above the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants  
**you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,**  
**to silence the enemy and the avenger.**
- 3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
**the moon and the stars that you have established;**
- 4 what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
**mortals that you care for them?**
- 5 Yet you have made them a little lower than God,  
**and crowned them with glory and honor.**
- 6 You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
**you have put all things under their feet,**
- 7 all sheep and oxen,  
**and also the beasts of the field,**
- 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
**whatever passes along the paths of the seas.**
- 9 O LORD, our Sovereign,  
**how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

### **Closing Prayer**

**Grant, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and that what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**