

Almighty Wisdom

I don't have any stats to back me up on this, but I'd venture to guess that the one single question that God gets asked more than anything else is, "*WHY?*" "*Why, God? Why me? Why this? Why now? Why not the other guy? Why?*" I know I've been there, far more than I can count and even more than I care to *admit*. I say this only because such questioning of God, although very natural and normal, does betray a bit of *unfaithfulness and lack of trust* on the part of the questioner. I know that may rub some of you the wrong way, but it's true. Just think about your own experiences in everyday life. If somebody is constantly questioning you, *do they trust you?* Well...it works both ways. You can't say that "those people" who constantly question you don't trust you, but when you do it to God, it's with a *perfect* trust in Him above all things. It doesn't work that way. In the words of the prophet Nathan: You are that man! So am I.

Today being Holy Trinity Sunday, it does us good to meditate on what it means to trust in God above all things. For starters, *who is God?* Who is this God that we claim to trust? Well...we confess it every single Sunday, whether we use the words of the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, or the Athanasian Creed (as we did today). We confess and agree with Scripture that He is triune; that is, He is three-in-one; not three separate Gods, but One God. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; *almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, all-righteous, and all-merciful and all-loving*.

Did you catch all those "alls" in that description? Almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing.... The Latin prefix would be "omni," as in *omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient*...you get the idea. Our appointed lessons for today speak to all these "omni" realities. For instance, we look to Isaiah, and we see a very clear image of the *all-powerful, omnipotent, omnipresent* God in His heavenly throne room. The train of His robe fills the heavenly, smoke-filled temple. The very foundations of the thresholds of heaven shake when God speaks. The whole scene bespeaks power and might and fullness.

But...we get all this, don't we? God's omnipotence isn't an issue with us, is it? We know He's all-powerful. We know He's omnipresent. We know He's with us always (though we don't always act like it), and we also know that He's omniscient; that is, He knows everything all the time. He knows what we're going through. He knows our hearts. He knows us better than we do. *None of this is really a problem for us*. We get. We understand it. We believe it (at least we say we do). What about God's *wisdom* though? *God doesn't always seem so wise, does He?* Scripture tells us that He works all things for the good of those who love Him, but I know that I would do certain things differently. God's ways don't always seem so efficient or effective or wise.

And here is where we struggle. Why doesn't God use all that power to heal us or our suffering loved one? Why doesn't God make this pain stop? He's got the power. Why doesn't He pull the trigger?! ***That doesn't seem very wise.*** Wouldn't alleviating suffering be more effective at getting people to come to faith, rather than subjecting them to suffering? Simple common sense says that you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar. Wouldn't the sweet honey of prosperity and abundance and wellness work a lot better at making Christians than the miserable crosses and sufferings that He allows us to endure? Why doesn't God make unbelievers repent and become Christian? Surely He could do it if He really wanted to. After all, He spoke all of creation into existence out of nothingness. Surely He could say the word, snap His fingers, and make everything all better. ***But...He doesn't. Instead, He lets fools be foolish... and go to hell.*** Why? What kind of a loving God does that? A lot of people get turned off on religion all together because of His perceived inaction...and yet He still does **nothing**. That's not very wise. ***Why, God? Why don't You do something?!***

St. Paul gives us an answer. Writing to the Roman Christians, who were being persecuted and hunted down and slaughtered simply because they were Christians, St. Paul points these suffering ones to the incomprehensible wisdom of their almighty and all-powerful God. *"Oh, the depth and the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable are His ways!"* **Folks: This isn't a lament. This is high praise!** Let that sink in.

These Christians are being hunted down and slaughtered. They're the "main event" at the coliseum. They're the fuel for the city lamps. It's not good. This isn't like the "persecution" we Christians face here in America. There's a lot more at stake than simply losing your cupcake business or have somebody say something stupid about us on Facebook. Times were so tough for these Christians that they were literally forced underground, holding worship in catacombs— ***underground cemeteries.*** They were questioning God's wisdom. They were asking "why?" *"Why is this happening to us? Why isn't God doing something about this?"* Sound familiar?

But here's the thing: St. Paul doesn't attempt to answer *for* God. Paul doesn't delve into ***theodicy***; that is, the practice of trying to give answer for God and explain why He is doing or acting in a certain way. St. Paul doesn't do what we so often do, or what we so often desire. His answer to the age-old "why" question is to simply point to God's unsearchable and inscrutable wisdom. ***"God is far smarter than any of us, and He knows what He's doing! Amen."***

I know we all believe this, but...it's ***far easier*** to believe when things are going well in life, versus when life has hit the skids and all you see when you look around is darkness, death, despair, fear and sorrow. When you're depressed; when you're in pain; when your life is in the sewer and you've been emotionally

eviscerated and you're feeling the crushing weight of the crosses you bear, hearing that God's wisdom is at work and He's in control and He knows what He's doing *doesn't exactly come across as very comforting sometimes*. Sometimes it comes across as a harsh, Law-filled punch in the nose. It's meant as Gospel, but it's heard as very condemning Law. "*God knows EXACTLY what He's doing to you.*"

But...this is where the words of Christ Himself in our Gospel lesson show us what God's almighty wisdom and power is really all about. "*God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for it, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.*" Folks: Here [the crucifix] is the wisdom of God, hung on a cross for all to see. Here is the unsearchable, inscrutable wisdom of God. **Here is what it's all about.** Here is where every problem, every worry, every concern, every woe is ultimately directed to and answered. Here is the fullest expression of God's powerful love, not just for you, but for *all* people...even the ones you don't like or who don't like you. And this is wisdom that **ONLY** God can have. Who would *ever* draw up the plan of salvation to look like this?! Who would ever draw up the plan of faith and victory and love and peace to look like death and defeat, forsakenness and horrific suffering?! Who? ***God, that's who;*** the very God who desires the death of no man; who desires that all turn and repent and confess their sins and hold fast to Him and His all-loving, all-merciful peace; the peace that is found **ONLY** in the all-atoning sacrifice of God Himself in the flesh—Jesus Christ.

Now, again, I know that you all know all of this already. I didn't just reveal some previously unknown secret to you. ***And yet...how often we forget.*** How often the fatigue and "fog of war" and dark clouds of fear and despair kick up, and we get blinded/deafened to this cruciform Truth and Peace. "*Why, God? Why me? Why now? Why this? Why?*" We want answers. We **DEMAND** answers. Folks: I'm not going to even try and give you an answer as to why you might be suffering or why the other guy is so well-off (or just allowed to be stupid in their obvious sin and unbelief or heretically stupid in things that clearly go against the very God who loves them and they claim to love). I'm not going to give you false counsel or bad advice, ***even if you really want to hear it.*** You may scoff at that, but this happens **all the time.** People often prefer the lie. The lie doesn't offend. It doesn't hurt. It doesn't ruffle feathers or rock the boat. It tells you exactly what you want to hear. The lie gives you that "warm and fuzzy" feeling that is so often elevated above and mistaken for the Truth of God, which is why the lie is more preferable and palatable than the Truth.

I won't do that. I can't do that. **Here is the Truth.** Here is almighty God, Jesus Christ—the wisdom, the love, the mercy, the righteousness of almighty God—in the flesh. In fact, here is the ***entire Holy Trinity*** at work...for you and your salvation. The almighty Father still sends His Son to you to bring you His

assurance of forgiveness, grace, mercy, and peace, no matter how bad things may seem on this side of eternity. *“Those who have seen Me have seen the Father.”* The only-begotten Son still holds out His pierced hands to you, beckoning you to turn around and come to and cleave to Him. *“Come to Me, all who are heavy-laden. Come, take, and eat.”* Yes, we still suffer. Yes, we still bear crosses. *“My grace is sufficient. I know what I’m doing. I’m working all things for your good and for the good of all those who love Me. My grace is all-sufficient. You’re okay. I’ve got you.”* The Holy Spirit of God, proceeding forth from the Father and the Son, works in us and enables to **hear and see and receive** these blessed realities of salvation. The Holy Spirit of God works that life-giving, life-saving miracle in you **through the hearing of God’s voice—God’s Word—** opening your ears, your hearts, and your minds to recognize and give thanks for the blessed joy and peace and wisdom that is Christ crucified.

My dear fellow children of God: ***I don’t have answers for you...at least not all the answers you might be looking for.*** I simply point you to almighty God. I point you to the almighty and all-powerful God, who fills heaven and earth; whose voice created out of nothing, and whose voice ***still*** shakes the heavens. I point you to almighty God, whose voice cried out in victory, *“It is finished,”* and who ***still*** bears these cruciform scars as an eternal blessed reminder to His heavenly Father that all the work; all the requirements; all the wrath; all the suffering has all been paid all in full by Him for us. ***That’s a lot of “alls” too, isn’t it?*** All the full, righteous, and fiery wrath of God against sin was poured out on Christ...not us. I direct your ears of faith to His voice, which ***still*** cries out and proclaims ***your innocence, your justification, and your peace.*** Those words of absolution and benediction that you hear aren’t the mere words of men who simply like tradition. Those are the timeless and eternal words of God for you. By the working of His Holy Spirit, you believe and hold fast to these Words of Life, Wisdom, and Peace.

You know...when you get it; when you understand it; when you trust and hold fast to this God-given eternal wisdom, it rocks your world and shakes your foundations...for joy. ***Everything else in life tends to get put in proper perspective when you consider it in light of Jesus Christ.*** It’s all so simple, so powerful, so wise and beautiful. Everything else pales in comparison. Everything else becomes a lot more palatable, manageable, bearable...even joyous. Everything else seems pretty foolish in the light of the cross of Jesus, as it all should.

There’s that “all” word again! Give thanks in **all** circumstances; in **all** places and at **all** times, for you are ever and ***always*** redeemed in Christ and because of Christ. Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy and His wisdom and His love for you endures forever!

AMEN