

May 22, Trinity Sunday: Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

by [Safwat Marzouk](#) in the [May 11, 2016](#) issue

Communities around the world are suffering from climate change, civil war, terrorism, forced migration, and much more. Churches are weary of polarization and division, and many now lack the ability or desire to have fellowship with people who are different from them. Individuals struggle with cancer and migraines and aching bones, or walk with loved ones who do.

In response to all this, some people paint an optimistic face on the world, seeking to push through the day's burdens almost oblivious to the painful realities around them. Others all but lose hope in a better future.

This week's lectionary texts help us navigate an alternative path. They affirm that a life formed by faith and hope, grounded in the creative and redeeming work of the triune God, is capable of confronting the difficulties of our journeys. Such faith and hope encourage awareness and activism; they also teach us when to let go, trusting that ultimately this is God's work.

The poems of Proverbs 8 and Psalm 8 offer some significant insights and encouragement. Both emphasize the transcendence of God, whose majesty and glory are evident in creation. Both make the point that the created world is well ordered, and everything in it falls into place as God wills.

Both also assert that the creator God is relational. The Proverbs text describes Wisdom, God's first creation—in existence before everything else was created, and available to all people with no discrimination. Wisdom, in whom God delights every day, rejoices in the created world and especially in human beings. This relational aspect of the transcendent God is even more evident in the psalm, where God, whose name is majestic in all the earth and whose glory is set above the heavens, chooses to share God's glory with humans. God shares with humans the glory of the responsibility toward the works of God's hands: the sheep, the oxen, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea.

When we are overwhelmed by our daily struggles, when we get weary because of the dehumanization that results from hatred and greed, Proverbs 8 and Psalm 8 remind us how God conceives of us as human beings crowned with glory and honor. When we are startled by natural, political, and social chaos, these texts assure us that God makes things work in harmony in this overwhelming world.

They can easily be misunderstood as perpetuating oblivious optimism. Certainly, there are many Christians who are sucked into their own worlds of leisure and comfort, shielding themselves from the cries of pain and suffering in the world around them. But these texts do not really speak of such an attitude toward the world. Instead they assert God's work in maintaining the world that God as a wise architect has created. What's more, Psalm 8 asserts that God calls humans to participate with God and bear their responsibility toward the world around them.

We cannot gaze upon God's magnificent creation without listening to its groaning. We're compelled to join in, to work with God and with others in the ministry of reconciliation.

The ordered world, with all aspects of creation working in harmony, is seen from a different angle in Romans 5. The harmony between God and the created order is disrupted as a result of human rebellion against the boundaries that were set between the divine and the human, between the Creator and the created. Paul speaks of enmity between God and humans.

But because the triune God is committed to the created world, Paul proclaims that God is at work restoring the harmonious relationship between God and the creation. Humans are declared to be in the right by faith, and we enjoy a peaceful and harmonious relationship with God through the grace manifested in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—and through the Holy Spirit, who holds fast in our hearts God's endless love toward us.

Humans, granted glory and honor at the time of the creation, are restored to this status through the salvific work of the triune God. It is only in light of the grace and love of God that humans can boast in the hope of sharing the glory of God. It's God's work, not a cause for human hubris and arrogance.

Boasting or rejoicing in suffering and in the hope in the glory of God—this counters the culture of shame that tends to put blame or disgrace on those who are marginalized because of their faith. Boasting in suffering is not an invitation to be

passive or complacent amid the world's violence and pain; nor does it mean we ignore the trauma and bruises that difficult experiences leave on our bodies and spirits. Instead, these difficult experiences uncover the power of perseverance and resilience hidden within us; they form us to be people of courage and action. Trusting in the work of God gives us courage to change what we can change, and it gives us hope beyond ourselves when we reach the end of what we can do.

Even when our hope is challenged by enduring suffering, we will not fail. Our hope will not be weary, because the love of God is fueled in our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit, who will help us understand the difficult things that surround the work of God in redeeming this world. As John says in the Gospel reading, this Spirit "will guide [us] into all the truth."