

The Inheritance of God

SERIES OVERVIEW

This series begins with the observance of Trinity Sunday, one of the most widely debated yet central doctrinal understandings of the Christian faith. To understand the Trinity is to understand God's presence with us and our lives with one another. The Trinity is often referred to as the *mystery* (Matt. 11:27) of the faith that requires or presupposes Divine revelation. There is much to comprehend about the statement "God in three persons," but as Christians and believers in the Triune God, here is what we do know:

- God came to earth as the fulfillment of God's prophetic Word.
- God came to earth through the womb of a virgin woman, Mary.
- God came to us in the flesh through God's only Son, the historic Jesus.
- God created and sustained intimate relationships with humankind.
- God came to earth to suffer and die for all who believe.
- God kept God's promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" by sending the manifest presence of God's Spirit (Matt 28:18).
- God is alive!

For all these reasons, 50 days after God raised Jesus from the dead, God sent the Promise, the Comforter, the Paraclete, The Holy Spirit . . . and the Dance begins: God-in-Three, Three-in-One! God-in-us, revealed in us as Creator, Liberator, Mediator.

In Western Christian tradition, Trinity Sunday is observed on only one Sunday out of the liturgical year that is said to be symbolic of the unity of the Trinity.

One of the best ways to begin to grasp the essence of the mystery of God is through the text of the **Nicene Creed** (public domain) established at the First Council of Nicaea in 325. This Affirmation of Faith stands as the only creed that claims ecumenical authority. It is embraced by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and major Protestant churches.

*We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.*

Through Him all things were made.
 For us and for our salvation
 He came down from heaven:
 by the power of the Holy Spirit
 He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.
 For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
 He suffered death and was buried.
 On the third day He rose again
 in accordance with the Scriptures;
 He ascended into heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
 and His kingdom will have no end.
 We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
 who proceeds from the Father. **[1]**
 With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified.
 He has spoken through the Prophets.
 We believe in one holy catholic (meaning “universal”) and apostolic Church.
 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
 We look for the resurrection of the dead,
 and the life of the world to come. AMEN.

[1] Roman Catholics and Protestants add ‘and the Son’ at this point. The version with “I” instead of “we” is equally valid, making it a personal confession of faith.

Week 1: Trinity Sunday	June 16	The Inheritance of Wisdom
Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31		
Week 2: 2nd Sunday after Pentecost	June 23	The Inheritance of Attentiveness
1 Kings 19:1-4, (5-7), 8-15a		
Week 3: 3rd Sunday after Pentecost	June 30	The Inheritance of [em]Power[ment]
2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14		
Week 4: 4th Sunday After Pentecost	July 07	The Inheritance of Trust
Acts 2:1-21		

*All scripture quotations are NRSV.

The Inheritance of God
Trinity Sunday: The Inheritance of Wisdom
Trinity Sunday, Year C
June 16, 2019

PLANNING NOTES

Reading Notes

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Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectionnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

June

June 16 [Trinity Sunday](#)

June 16 [Peace with Justice Sunday](#)

June 16 [Father's Day](#)

June 19 [Juneteenth](#)

July

July 4 [Independence Day \(USA\)](#)

August

All Month [Back to School](#)

August 6 [Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial](#)

Planning for This Series

How can this historic statement of faith provide further definition and clarity of what the Christian church believes about the nature of our Triune God during the seasons of Trinity Sunday/Pentecost/Kingdomtide? More importantly, how might this Trinitarian legacy be passed on to our children and youth?

There could be no more appropriate time to demonstrate the concepts of *inheritance, relationship, creative speaking, and listening* than during this high holy day, Trinity Sunday, celebrated alongside Father's Day and beyond. For that reason, this series seeks to punctuate the ways in which God, Father (Creator), God, Son (Savior), God, Spirit (Sophia) are dancing together over, among, within, around us in

perfect rhythm and divine harmony. This is the *POWER* of ONE-IN-THREE, THREE-IN-ONE. Not only are we recipients of this *POWER*, but we are also called to be a reincarnation of this inheritance and to pass it on! What better way, place, or time for the church to demonstrate the richness of this rite of passage than Father's Day! Here are two ideas for your consideration:

An in-depth study series of the Nicene Creed shared by several generations within your faith community could result in a contemporary translation of the creed through the medium of the spoken word, composed by children, youth, and/or young adults. What is the outcome of this experience? In the prologue of John's Gospel, the writer substitutes *Logos* for *Word*. In the third century, *Logos* functioned as that which offered logic or reason. However, John is referring to the Greek meaning of *Logos*, the mind of Christ: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (John 1:3).

Perhaps a more contemporary **written description** of the character of God from the creative hearts and minds of millennials, next-gens, and others might serve to build bridges among multiple generations in your congregation. A stunning example of this art form is aptly demonstrated in "Next Generation Resources" of *The Africana Worship Series Book for Year C*, (Discipleship Resources, p. 96, www.discipleshipresources.org). The litany is titled "Trinity Sunday: Custom-Made by God's Own Hand." Written by Sharletta Green, the litany is a paraphrase of Proverb 8:1-4, 22-31

A second outcome might be an **action** or **embodiment** of how we perceive God.

"The Word became flesh and made his home among us" (John 1:14a).

"No one has ever seen God. God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made God known" (John 1:18).

Jesus Christ, the *Logos*, becomes flesh!

"What came into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:3b-5).

What a metaphor! How might this concept live in the celebration of worship? Consider various forms of liturgical movement:

- Dancers (multi-generations, genders) leading the Processional with the Light of Christ, the Bible, the cross, emblematic of the dance of the Trinity (*perichorisis*)
- Scripture choreographed, while the voice of the reader is **heard, not seen**.
- Procession of the Communion elements

What other artistic ways can your congregation experience, embody, live into the legacy extended to us through the power and presence of our Triune God?

THE INHERITANCE of WISDOM

PROVERBS 8:1-4, 22-31

The Gifts of Wisdom

¹Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?

²On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;

³beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out:

⁴“To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live.

Wisdom’s Part in Creation

²²The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.

²³Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

²⁴When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. ²⁵

Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth—

²⁶when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world’s first bits of soil.

²⁷When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

²⁸when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,

²⁹when 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, ³⁰then I was beside him, like a master worker;

and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, ³¹rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

JOHN 16:12-15

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

Abbreviations

AWS – Africana Worship Series, Year C

SOZ – *Songs of Zion*

TFWS - *The Faith We Sing*

UMH - *The United Methodist Hymnal*

URW - *Upper Room Worshipbook*

W&S - *Worship & Song, Music Edition*

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Music:

UMH 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 71, 75, 77, 85, 88, 89, 92, 97, 100, 113, 114, 117, 119, 121, 123, 141, 148, 151, 152, 203, 267, 325, 365, 385, 400, 422, 427, 428, 430, 433, 434, 441, 450, 475, 480, 492, 494, 505, 519, 539, 576, 592, 613, 632, 645, 651, 680

Canticle:

UMH 112

Prayers:

UMH 76, 429, 639,

TFWS: 2008, 2009, 2022, 2023, 2046, 2047, 2050, 2191, 2196, 2191, 2255, 2258, 2268, 2276

SOZ: 139, 226

PREACHING NOTES

The Inheritance of Wisdom

Welcome to the first week of our worship series, “The Inheritance of God,” which begins with a calendric doozy: This Sunday is not only Trinity Sunday in the liturgical year; it also coincides with Father’s Day from the civic calendar and Peace with Justice Sunday from our United Methodist calendar. Moreover, we are nearing the end of the appointment cycle, and many of us are anticipating change, whether it is a physical move or moving into a new phase or season of our shared church life.

In the midst of the chaos, we encounter a confounding [Bible passage](#) about personified wisdom on a day when many in the congregation will expect some wisdom on the Trinity, on fatherhood, or on peace with justice. While this week’s preaching notes are tailored to addressing Trinity Sunday, there are some nuggets for other topical approaches.

For Trinity Sunday, we may be tempted to get caught up in theological gymnastics discussing the finer nuances of Trinitarian thought. However, because *hopefully* we are praising the Triune God explicitly and reinforcing those theological nuances throughout the year, we (the Discipleship Ministries planning team) thought it pertinent to ask a narrower question: “What does this inheritance of wisdom teach us about the nature of our Triune God?”

Here’s what we know about Wisdom according to the portrait in Proverbs:

- First, Wisdom is a creation of God, the first of God's acts long ago, even before the earth was created. [Here it may be tempting to draw a Trinitarian parallel, but it is clear from the passage that there is no co-eternal aspect of Wisdom.]
- Second, Wisdom participated in God's handiwork (v. 30 – "then I was beside him, like a master worker") and rejoiced in God before the outset of the world.
- Third, Wisdom not only rejoiced in God, but also shared in God's delight for humanity (v. 31).

There's a unifying thread at play here. The relational nature of God is revealed through this passage about Wisdom. From the very beginning, God—with Wisdom as God's playmate and master worker—was relational in the process of creating, molding, shaping, illuminating, and delighting in the created order. This portrait of Wisdom and God is not some kind of inchoate Trinity, but it does affirm the relational quality of God that we see in the inner workings of the Trinity. God is not a lone ranger.

The gospel reading from [John 16:12-15](#) more explicitly demonstrates the inner relational dynamic of the Trinity. Jesus announces, "All that the Father has is mine," a reality that will be declared by the Spirit.

While this may sound simplistic on a daunting day like Trinity Sunday, the simple truth is that our Triune God is relational. There is something beautiful about divine mystery being expressed in such a simple term as "relational." God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit are beautifully entangled in a relational dance, reminding us that God's very nature is communitarian.

The nature of God challenges our individualist orientation and speaks prophetically to our culture's glorification of personal agency and individual sovereignty. If our God is at once individual and communal—One in Three—then we are called to mirror that dynamic in our own lives.

God's communitarian and relational nature is a key bridging concept you could make for whichever approach you are taking for this Sunday's sermon.

- If you're talking about Trinity Sunday, preach about the inherent relationality to our Triune God and what that means for our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. Being a disciple of Christ cannot happen in solitude. Spiritual formation and growth do not happen alone. No matter how "one" we think we might be, we are always "more" because of our call to live, to be, and to grow in community. We are individuals, but as children created in the image of our Triune God, that means we were created for relationship.
- If you're talking about Father's Day, ponder the connection between God's relational nature and parenthood. How does this inheritance of wisdom and relationality inform parenting (at any stage) in a twenty-first-century culture? Cling to the image of relational playfulness we see in the Proverbs passage between God and personified wisdom.
- If you're talking about Peace with Justice Sunday, highlight how the relational nature of God is expressed in our missional witness to the world. We are not called to give only of our finances or

material goods to those in need, but to make relational connections with all God's children. If God is a relational God, then the *missio dei*—the mission of God—is relational too.

This relational inheritance from God is the bedrock of our faith, and we see that in the Proverbs passage and in the gospel reading from John. Here are a few questions to reflect on devotionally or to think about in terms of story sharing in your sermon:

- Where in your own life have you recognized that you are more than an individual?
- Where in the life of your congregation have you seen the relational nature of God at work?
- What would it look like if we embraced our relationality to the fullest extent?
- How would our society shift for the better if we lived into the relational dynamic of our Triune God?

God is One. God is Three.
Individual. Communal.
Relational.

So preach that good news!

GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES

Articles and Resources

- [Trinity Sunday](#)
- [A Great Thanksgiving for Trinity Sunday](#)
- [Meditation for Trinity Sunday](#)
- [21st Century Africana Worship Resources for Trinity Sunday](#)
- [A Feast with the Trinity](#)
- [We Join in Proclaiming](#)
- [Call to Worship for Trinity Sunday/Peace with Justice Sunday](#)
- [We Are Called: A 21st Century Worship Resource for the Pentecost Season](#)
- [Worship Planning for the Season after Pentecost \(Ordinary Time\) Year C](#)

Seasonal/Secular

- [Peace with Justice Sunday](#)
- [Father's Day \(June 16\)](#)
- [Juneteenth \(June 19\)](#)
- [Call to Worship and Opening Prayer for Father's Day](#)
- [Litany of Peace for Father's Day](#)

The Inheritance of God
2nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: The Inheritance of Attentiveness
2nd Sunday After Pentecost, Year C
June 23, 2019

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THE INHERITANCE OF ATTENTIVENESS

1 KINGS 19: 1-15a

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." ³ Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." ⁸ He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹ At that place he came to a cave and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

¹¹ He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." ¹⁵ Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

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TFWS: 2120, 2213, 2025, 2052, 2080, 2165, 2167, 2120, 2191, 2225

SOZ: 6, 9, 11, 14, 32, 64, 80, 102, 138, 153, 158, 182, 220, 226, 233

URW: 64, 99, 141, 154, 159, 173, 198, 203, 205, 206, 257, 394, 395, 415, 416

W&S: 3003, 3017, 3018

PREACHING NOTES

The Inheritance of Attentiveness

Good listeners are risk takers.

Imagine a two-sided balancing scale (although the technical term is a “double-pan balance”).

If we were to place the act of speaking on one side of the scale and the act of listening on the other side, we might assign speaking the weightier importance. As communicators of the gospel, we think our words matter. By holding the Bible in one hand and our newspapers in the other, we might be prone to believe that our communication events are riskier than the act of listening. We think there is more at stake in *mis*communicating something, rather than in not paying attention with our listening faculties.

Certainly, the dominance of speaking over listening reflects a largely Western worldview, and especially so in The United States.

Our political scene is full of talking heads.

In our churches, those who speak loudest at committee meetings are often the ones who get their way.

In our families, we are drawn to gregarious and warm personalities who can communicate love and affection with their words and actions.

We have assigned great cultural value to those who can risk “putting themselves out there” by asserting themselves through words and persuasive arguments, all while maintaining a friendly and approachable demeanor.

We prioritize the speakers over the listeners because speaking is believed to be riskier.

The prophet Elijah was a great risk-taking communicator, speaking God’s truth to power. In the previous chapter, he had declared the God of Israel’s superiority over the prophets of Baal, which resulted in the

killing of these prophets. This sets us up for [today's scene](#), where Jezebel promises to exact revenge upon Elijah. Elijah runs for his life, flees the scene, finds a broom tree to sleep under, where he then pleads for God to take his life. Elijah is overcome with fear, overwhelmed, and is at his wit's end.

Here the passage shifts from understanding Elijah as a risk-taking speaker to Elijah as a risk-taking listener. The angel of the Lord tells him to "get up and eat" two separate times. Elijah *listens*—even though he does not know what lies ahead—and is strengthened for his next journey.

Then the word of the Lord comes to Elijah, telling him to stand on the mountain while the Lord "passes by."

A great wind surges to the point the mountains begin to break apart and rocks are splitting in half, again and again. The earth literally shakes and quakes beneath Elijah's feet, followed by a fire.

BUT ELIJAH DOESN'T COVER HIS FACE.

Who, among you, if rocks were swirling around you, would not cover your face?

Who, among you, if fires were raging about, would not protect your face from being scorched?

All of us risk-taking communicators should be a little shocked right now, because we would like to keep our faces, especially for our line of work.

But here is the powerful moment: *Elijah only covers his face with his mantle when he encounters God in the "sound of silence."*

As the scriptures said, God was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire.

The very presence of God was in the sound of silence.

It is *this* still silence of God that causes Elijah to wrap his face in his mantle.

Elijah took the greatest risk by listening to God.

In the midst of Elijah's fear after encountering God through the still silence, he simply repeats what he said to God in verse 10: "I have been very zealous for the Lord . . ."

[Note: I imagine in this moment that Elijah was a little shocked and did not know what to say, so he robotically repeated his earlier phrase.]

This time, God responds with direct instruction: "Go."

"Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus."

It wasn't until Elijah took the risk to listen to God's still, small voice that he continued on in his terrifying journey.

Listening is risky.

Attending to the still, small voice of God is risky.

Yet, this is the inheritance of our faith as revealed through the scriptures: attending to God is risky, but it's worth it.

How many times have we been in that situation?

How many times have we attended to the still, small voice of God and come out on the other side, realizing that it was worth it all along?

On the other hand, how many times have we intentionally *ignored* that voice, for fear that it might cause us to risk? For fear that it might cause us to transform?

Good listeners are risk takers.

The inheritance of our faith is to attend to God.

- To attend to God's work and witness in the world.
- To attend to Christ's command to love God and neighbor.
- To attend to the Spirit's stirrings deep within us and in those around us.

And yes, to attend to the still, small voice of God that comes to us in the silence.

It's that silence that causes us to cover our heads fearfully with our mantle.

And yet it is that same silence that causes us to take the risk and listen nonetheless.

To listen is to risk.

And in taking that risk of attending to God, we open ourselves up for transformation.

This does not negate the fear, though.

I imagine as Elijah went back into the wilderness that he was still afraid.

But he knew that the risk was going to be worth it.

Somehow—and in some way—it was going to be worth it.

As you are thinking about preaching on this inheritance of attentiveness, I invite you to reflect on situations where you have engaged in that risk-taking activity of listening to God.

- How did those situations turn out for you?

In thinking about your community of faith, how is your church called to be more attentive to God's still, small (and risky) voice?

Attentiveness to God is our inheritance, even when it is risky.

GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES

Articles and Resources

- [A Costly Healing](#)
- [We Are Called: A 21st Century Worship Resource for the Pentecost Season](#)
- [Worship Planning for the Season after Pentecost \(Ordinary Time\) Year C](#)
- [THE GREAT THANKSGIVING FOR THE SEASON AFTER PENTECOST \(ORDINARY TIME, OR KINGDOMTIDE\)](#)

Seasonal/Secular

- [Father's Day](#) (June 16)
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The Inheritance of God
3rd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: The Inheritance of [em]POWER[ment]
3rd Sunday After Pentecost, Year C
June 30, 2019

PLANNING NOTES

Reading Notes

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There could be no more appropriate time to demonstrate the concepts of *inheritance, relationship, creative speaking, and listening* than during this high holy day, Trinity Sunday, celebrated alongside Father's Day and beyond. For that reason, this series seeks to punctuate the ways in which God, Father (Creator), God, Son (Savior), God, Spirit (Sophia) are dancing together over, among, within, around us in perfect rhythm and divine harmony. This is the *POWER* of ONE-IN-THREE, THREE-IN-ONE. Not only are we recipients of this *POWER*, but we are also called to be a reincarnation of this inheritance and to pass it on! What better way, place, or time for the church to demonstrate the richness of this rite of passage than Father's Day! Here are two ideas for your consideration:

An in-depth study series of the Nicene Creed shared by several generations within your faith community could result in a contemporary translation of the creed through the medium of the spoken word, composed by children, youth, and/or young adults. What is the outcome of this experience? In the

prologue of John's Gospel, the writer substitutes *Logos* for *Word*. In the third century, *Logos* functioned as that which offered logic or reason. However, John is referring to the Greek meaning of *Logos*, the mind of Christ: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (John 1:3).

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A second outcome might be an **action** or **embodiment** of how we perceive God.

"The Word became flesh and made his home among us" (John 1:14a).

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What a metaphor! How might this concept live in the celebration of worship? Consider various forms of liturgical movement:

- Dancers (multi-generations, genders) leading the Processional with the Light of Christ, the Bible, the cross, emblematic of the dance of the Trinity (*perichorisis*)
- Scripture choreographed, while the voice of the reader is **heard, not seen**.
- Procession of the Communion elements

What other artistic ways can your congregation experience, embody, live into the legacy extended to us through the power and presence of our Triune God?

2 KINGS 2:1-2, 6-14

¹When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ²Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

⁶Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.

⁷ Fifty men of the company of prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they were both standing by the Jordan. ⁸ Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit."

¹⁰ He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not."

¹¹ As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven.

¹² Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

¹³ He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

¹⁴ He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

AWS – Africana Worship Series, Year C

SOZ – *Songs of Zion*

TFWS - *The Faith We Sing*

UMH - *The United Methodist Hymnal*

URW - *Upper Room Worshipbook*

W&S - *Worship & Song*, Music Edition

LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Music:

UMH 77, 97, 110, 113, 141, 151, 152, 159, 181, 203, 206, 220, 330, 336, 338, 384, 393, 396, 398, 402, 407, 415, 428, 430, 500, 538, 544, 549, 579, 603, 651, 700, 704, 730

Canticle:

UMH 652

TFWS: 2008, 2016, 2047, 2038, 2049, 2092, 2101, 2104, 2108, 2118, 2129, 2130, 2151, 2162, 2169, 2171, 2175, 2176, 2179, 2182, 2188, 2191, 2192, 2196, 2201, 2215, 2211, 2221, 2224, 2227, 2240, 2242, 2256, 2262, 2273, 2278

SOZ: 8, 9, 11, 32, 64, 72, 80, 102, 104, 134, 138, 158, 182, 226

URW: 64, 99, 141, 154, 159, 173, 198, 203, 205, 206, 257, 394, 395, 415, 416

W&S: 3003, 3017, 3018

Articles and Resources for June 30

- [Song of the Righteous: A Call to Worship for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, Year C](#)
- [No Turning Back](#)
- [We Are Called: A 21st Century Worship Resource for the Pentecost Season](#)
- [Worship Planning for the Season after Pentecost \(Ordinary Time\) Year C](#)
- [THE GREAT THANKSGIVING FOR THE SEASON AFTER PENTECOST \(ORDINARY TIME, OR KINGDOMTIDE\)](#)

Seasonal/Secular

- [Independence Day \(USA\), July 4](#)

PREACHING NOTES

The Inheritance of [em]Power[ment]

In almost every TV show or movie, there is a character who seems to be uncertain or insecure in his or her own capabilities. Maybe the character is a dancer who is full of self-doubt or an office employee who cannot seem to get the hang of things. At some point in the natural progression of the plot, this same person is usually transformed as he/she blossoms into a new beginning, full of newly found confidence. If the plot follows ALL of the clichés, then those transformed individuals were empowered by key friends, family members, and/or colleagues along the way.

Enter [Elisha and Elijah](#).

Elisha is dedicated to Elijah's prophetic ministry and does not want to see Elijah go away. So he clings to him. He clings to Elijah on the journey to Bethel, even though Elijah advises him to "stay here." Elisha again clings to Elijah—this time more boldly—as they journey to the Jordan, despite Elijah's command to "stay here."

It is in this dynamic that we are witnessing a transformation. Elisha is moving from insecurity and uncertainty about his own role and status toward an increasing amount of confidence. What seems like initial clinginess morphs into a principled protest of Elijah's command to "stay here" (v. 6). Even before the mantle is passed, Elisha is transforming into someone different. He is claiming the boldness of Elijah that he has witnessed firsthand and is using it as a part of his own toolkit.

They cross the Jordan together, and we reach a breaking point in the plot. The increasingly confident Elisha is confronted with Elijah's statement: "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you."

Pause right there and immerse yourself in the narrative.

We have a power dynamic at play: a powerful, well-known prophet (Elijah) and an "up-and-coming" prophet (Elisha). The one who has more social power is asking the one with less power, "What can I do for you?"

Many of us have been in a situation like that before. If you are a pastor, maybe you have had a district superintendent or a bishop ask a similar question. Maybe you have met someone else "important" who, in trying to display their graciousness, asks if they can do anything for you.

Bring a moment like that to mind.

When the individual posed the question to you, "What can I do for you," or "How can I help," how long did you pause as you thought about what you would say? How many negotiations were taking place in your brain as you were trying to decipher what is a good "ask" and what might be too much?

Now, return to the scripture passage and imagine what might have been going through Elisha's head and how long it took him to respond when he boldly said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit."

The clingy and seemingly insecure Elisha we encountered just a few verses prior is now making the audacious "ask" for a DOUBLE SHARE of Elijah's spirit.

Who is this new Elisha and where did he come from?

In connecting this story to our worship series, there are two inheritances on display.

This first is the inheritance of power.

When Elijah was taken up into heaven, Elisha picked up the mantle that had fallen from Elijah; he struck the waters of the Jordan with it, and the waters separated. The same God who was with Elijah now

demonstrates God's power through Elisha. Elisha's new ownership of mantle symbolizes the transfer of power from prophet to prophet.

At the same time, there is an inheritance of empowerment. This empowerment came explicitly through relationship and connection. Elijah empowered Elisha to claim more authority, not only with his words but also in bringing Elisha alongside him (much to his chagrin). We witness a new boldness in Elisha as a "puts himself out there" in demanding a double portion of Elijah's spirit.

Power and empowerment are both large and dynamic topics and could be approached in a variety of ways. In terms of sermon cohesion, it may be more effective to focus on one or the other, power or empowerment. As such, here are some closing questions for you to ponder and consider as you prepare your sermons and unpack this inheritance.

Power:

- What type of power have we inherited as Christians? From whom and how?
- Why have we inherited this power and toward what end?
- How do dynamics of power—positive, neutral, and negative—show up in society? In our churches? In our families?
- When and how have you seen power stewarded well?
- How are we being called to steward power (personally, in our congregations, in our communities)?
- What is the relationship between power and authority?
- Between power and privilege?

Empowerment:

- Who have you/we been empowered by? Theologically? Experientially?
- Why do you think people are so captivated by empowerment narratives?
- In what situations of our society and world has empowerment led to great success? To failure?
- How are we being called to empower others through relationship?
- How might our churches participate in the empowerment of others?
- What is the relationship between mentoring and empowering?

As we have seen in the story of Elijah and Elisha, both power and empowerment are dynamic, risky, and weighty inheritances of God. They must be stewarded well.

GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES

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Seasonal/Secular

- [Independence Day](#)

The Inheritance of God
4th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: The Inheritance of Trust
4th Sunday After Pentecost, Year C
July 07, 2019

PLANNING NOTES

Reading Notes

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).

Lectionnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

July

July 4 [Independence Day \(USA\)](#)

August

All Month [Back to School](#)

August 6 [Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial](#)

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INHERITANCE OF TRUST

II King 5:1-14

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. ² Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet

who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”⁴ So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said.⁵ And the king of Aram said, “Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.”

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments.⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, “When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy.”⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.”

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.”⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house.¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.”¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?” He turned and went away in a rage.¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, “Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean’?”¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant.”

Abbreviations

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LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Music:

UMH 66, 67, 116, 139, 265, 266, 305, 340, 377, 378, 393, 480, 510, 605,

TFWS: 2018, 2036, 2049, 2051, 2144, 2171, 2174, 2185, 2186, 2213, 2236, 2254, 2260, 2265, 2269, 2282, 2284, 2250, 2253, 2262, 2273, 2278

SOZ: 3, 10, 20, 198, 207, 211, 226, 228

URW: 64, 99, 141, 154, 159, 173, 198, 203, 205, 206, 257, 394, 395, 415, 416

W&S: 3003, 3017, 3018

PREACHING NOTES

The Inheritance of Trust

Trust is a highly valued commodity these days.

Through the rise of technology, democratized news reporting, and the resulting increase of “fake news,” we now have to decipher which news outlets we ought to trust.

The popularity of text messaging over “traditional” phone calls has now led to the evolution of punctuation, for example. Exclamation marks—once sparingly used—are now the norm in conveying excitement. In responding to an invitation, the reply “Sure” is much more ambiguous and perhaps even ominous than the decidedly exuberant, “Sure!” We have adjusted our punctuation in order to communicate to the other person that they can trust our response.

Due to the polarization of our political climate, if one family member holds a differing political opinion from the rest of the family, they are “marked” in some fashion. Suddenly, their opinion on related matters might not be as trustworthy anymore.

Trust in religious institutions is decidedly low, and for one in five religious “nones,” their distrust of organized religion is why they are religiously unaffiliated. [1]

In our faith, Jesus’ command to love God and to love neighbor is one of the simplest sounding instructions we have from the Bible. Yet, we cannot even get that right because we do not know how to love our neighbors. Why? Because we do not trust them.

We like to think that we trust our neighbors, but as we see in our unjust criminal justice system, as we see in our crisis at the US-Mexico border, as we see in our denomination, as we see in our local churches, as we see in our school systems, as we see in our families, we do not have trust.

In scripture, [we encounter the character of Naaman](#), a great commander of King Aram’s army. He is suffering from leprosy and is desperate for healing. A young woman, a captive from Israel (the “other,” who lacks power and social standing), speaks with authority and certainty to Naaman’s wife that the

prophet Elisha in the land of Israel could heal Naaman. Maybe it was out of desperation, or maybe it was the still, small voice of God speaking to Naaman, but Naaman trusted the Israelite woman and embarked on a journey to the land of Israel to be healed.

Naaman then encounters Elisha (the “other,” from a differing religion and territory). Remember him from last week—with his inheritance of power that came with the transferred ownership of Elijah’s mantle? Elisha gives Naaman instruction to wash seven times in the Jordan River. Despite Naaman’s initial grumblings and discontent with Elisha’s suggestion, Naaman trusts and heeds the advice of Elisha due to the persuasion of his servants (the “others” who lack power and social standing).

Naaman immerses himself seven times, and Naaman is healed.

THREE TIMES in this narrative, Naaman is putting his trust in the “other.” Whether it is the religio-ethnic “other” in trusting the young, female Israelite captive, or Elisha, the prophet of the “other” land and religion, Naaman puts his trust in them. Then, even when Naaman’s trust runs dry upon receiving what seemed to be ridiculous advice from Elisha, he trusted his servants, who were “others” in terms of their social standing. By trusting the “other” in all three instances, Naaman is healed.

While this scripture passage often serves as a proof-text for why Israel’s God is greater than the others (because Naaman is healed by Israel’s prophet in Israel’s land), this passage is equally about trust.

It is about trust in God and it is about trust in the “other.”

Trust is an inheritance from God.

God has entrusted us with the stewardship of the world, everything from the natural realm to our relationships with one another. In turn, we are called to trust God in word and in deed.

In light of this passage, it stands to reason that trust in God leads to trust in the “other.”

This flies in the face of the operant wisdom of the world.

The “other” is misleading; the “other” is wrong; the “other” is so different that they cannot be trusted. Yet, Naaman trusted the “other,” and his flesh was healed.

Likewise, we are called to trust the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate One who draws us to the “other” and says “love them,” that the world may be healed.

To love is to trust.

As you ponder this inheritance of trust, what are some instances in your own life where you might do a better job of trusting the “other”?

What would the world look like if we were to operate from a position of trust rather than suspicion?

I also wonder, “Must we be desperate like Naaman to learn how to trust one another?”

- Should it take something dramatic and momentous (like the diagnosis of leprosy) to engender this trust?
- I certainly hope not.
- How can trust of the “other” be cultivated in your congregation? In your community?

In our divided world, in our divided churches, in our divided communities, in our divided families, we could certainly benefit from more trust: trust in God **and** trust in/through neighbor.

What first steps shall we take?

The transformation of the world hangs in the balance.

[1] Michael Lipka, “Why America’s ‘None’s Left Religion Behind,” Pew Research Center (August 24, 2016) <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/24/why-americas-nones-left-religion-behind/>

GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES

Articles and Resources

- [Call to Worship for the Seventh Sunday After Pentecost](#)
- [Sent in Jesus’ Name/Prayers of the People](#)
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