My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray. Our Lord God of our grateful hearts, minds, Spirits, and souls, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

Trinity Sunday is a time when we can examine the many ways God is present in our lives, and the role that God assumes in guiding our lives. I wanted us to start out with reading Proverbs because it’s crucial for us to know what Wisdom’s role is both in our understanding of God and ourselves.

Now, for me at least, it’s no surprise that Wisdom is anthropomorphized as a woman. But I think it’s even more amazing that for a book that was put together in a male-dominated society, they viewed wisdom’s ideal as having feminine traits. Patience. Love. Inclusivity. But also that Wisdom is the first thing that God creates, that time even before the first words of Genesis where God created the heavens and the earth. Before any of that, Wisdom was brought forth by God, the first of God’s works. OK? (wait for response). Alright.

So Wisdom is here alongside God and witnessed the creation, we are told, filled with delight day after day, rejoicing in God’s presence and the whole world, and delighting in humankind. She wants to get our attention. But she doesn’t tell us what we want to hear. We want what we want, but wisdom tells us that’s not a good path to follow. Switching to our Gospel reading, it’s little wonder that Jesus tells his disciples that he has a lot of stuff left to say to them, but they cannot bear it now. It’s as if the human heart can only sustain so much cognitive dissonance at any one time before it needs a break. And it suggests that we won’t get it right every time.

But we don’t like to own up to our mistakes, because we usually don’t like feeling shameful or looking foolish for having made them in the first place. We don’t see any upside in acknowledging behavior that puts us in a negative light—we seek to be admired, and fear being despised or ridiculed.

Sam Maglio and Taly Reich, university professors in Toronto and Yale, began researching the intersection of gut feelings, attitude certainty, and the true self.

They did a study specifically regarding online purchasing. What they found was that customers who admitted in their reviews to making previous purchasing mistakes actually got MORE trust and respect from would-be buyers than those who wrote reviews without mentioning mistakes in *their* purchasing experiences.

Maglio and Reich did this across a couple of different products: headphone brands, florist services, and breath mints, and the participants in the study were shown one of two reviews. The reviews were identical in nature, except in one of them the reviewer expressed personal dissatisfaction with a previous purchase. Interestingly, the potential purchasers were attracted to the advice of the ones who admitted their previous mistake. This, despite having their admitting having made a mistake previously in a public, online review for all to see.

 Reliance on feelings changes what people choose. And when those feelings of shame are overcome to be shared with others, it can have great impact on folks who have yet to figure out what’s the right way to proceed.

And I’m not talking headphones or breath mints.

We are taught from the time we’re knee-high to a grasshopper that we learn more from our mistakes than our successes. But this study suggests that there’s some power to the public witness of admitting that failure.

The twelve-step programs know this instinctively, don’t they? The first step of any of the Anonymous groups know that admitting powerlessness and failure to overcoming the addiction has to happen before anything else. Public defenders know that clients have a much better chance of being honest with themselves when they can acknowledge personal mistakes.

The courage to admit wrong is at the heart of our Christian faith, isn’t it? It’s wisdom that allows us to not be shamed into better behavior, but to absorb what we have done, what others have to say, and to move forward with repentance, restitution, and grace. That’s not to say that wisdom is easy. Depending on what’s happening, it can be darned uncomfortable and disturbing. But the Spirit of Truth that Jesus talks about, the wisdom of our own hearts, can give us genuine peace even when we are genuinely scared out of our minds.

We just went through this with COVID-19. Hope in God allowed us to be confident in that crisis, that we would listen to public health first, understand the fact that vaccinations would help us gather again, and that if we all did these things, we could move forward in our love for one another and our mission in the community.

This Spirit of Truth rattled us for a time, but we need to seek the partnership of knowing God’s wisdom at creation, following God’s plan for creation, seeking God’s teachings for how to live, and hearing that even today those original blessings are available to us if we would be faithful to the path Christ has laid out for us: love each other with our whole hearts, love creation with our choices and being, and loving saying “I’m sorry” when we screw up the first two. That’s the hard work of the God we hold dear in our Trinity of Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. We may cling to one for our strength, but we must recognize the sovereignty of all in our lives.

We need some serious help to steep ourselves in this partnership, that includes the wisdom of God, even as it challenges our comfortable lives we live each day.

I’ll leave you with these final thoughts.

We have limits on our own vision, just as we don’t read the whole bible because there’s limits to our attention. But the few lines after Proverbs 8:31 read as follows, spoken again by Lady Wisdom:

“Now then, my people, listen to me; blessed are those who keep my ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it. Blessed is the person who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord; but whoever fails to find me harms themselves, and all who hate me love death.”

Our reckoning with our limits needs to see what we do and do not see, our “blind spots” as it were. It’s only when we commit to discovering, and admitting, our blind spots that our perspective might change and we find new humility and forgiveness. And that commitment might be the beginning of a better world, a wise one just being created in our sight. Wisdom indeed.

 Thanks be to God, Amen.