

## Trinity Sunday C -- 2025

June 15, 2025

Saint Barnabas, Bainbridge Island

The Rev. Canon Cristi Chapman

[Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31](#)

[Psalm 8](#)

[Romans 5:1-5](#)

[John 16:12-15](#)



Gotcha!<sup>1</sup>

Twice last week, I was in conversations that included the phrase “remember when.” The first involved the neighborhood we have called home for the last 27 years. A friend observed it is one of the few places in Seattle that “time forgot.” I’m not sure that’s a compliment. It’s also arguable whether time forgot us. I still remember when we were some of the youngest people who lived on the block and one of the only families with young kids. Now, we have become those cranky old people, and our daughter is almost the same age we were when we first moved there.

In the second conversation, my husband and I marveled about all of the change that’s happened in another part of Seattle. Unlike Magnolia, this is not a neighborhood that “time forgot.” As we drove through Wallingford, we found ourselves waxing poetic about all the things we remember that are no longer there.

“Remember when.” It’s a phrase I imagine many of you have been uttering lately, too. You have, and are undergoing, significant change at St. Barnabas right now. Last week, you bid your beloved rector a glorious farewell after many years of faithful ministry together. In May, you also celebrated the life of another former rector and commended his soul to God. Then, of course, there are the changes you notice on the island and across this beloved country of ours that give many of us cause for pause.

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<sup>1</sup>This picture hangs in the sacristy of St. Paul’s, Pt. Townsend. It was created by a local artist and is titled “And the Word Went Forth.”

The act of remembering is a sacred one. It helps us find our place and connect our experiences into a larger narrative that spans generations beyond our own. How you and I remember is a tricky thing, though.

Some people latch onto their own memories as if they are irrefutable facts. Any variation or difference feels like a challenge to truth itself. Remembering rightly turns into an exercise of remembering correctly. Over time, memories start to harden, and with them, our hearts do, too. Idols may make successful television programming, but they present significant challenges when it comes to our spiritual health and our understanding of God.

Others embrace the act of remembering with curiosity. There's a recognition that each person adds something of value. Only with these additional perspectives can a clearer picture of the truth emerge. That's when remembering rightly turns into an exercise of remembering honestly. Then, memories become a portal into something more expansive, mysterious, holy, and good. In that way, memories can serve as an icon.

It is that kind of holy, faithful, honest remembering that you are engaged in right now. Later this morning, we will commission the Profile Committee for Saint Barnabas. They will walk alongside you as you discern who God is calling you to be in this season of life at Saint Barnabas. One of the ways you do that is by remembering rightly. That includes an honest assessment of your strengths and challenges as apprentices of Jesus. It also includes an honest assessment of your history and your hopes for the future. Embrace those sacred acts of remembering with curiosity, and know, friends, that you already are an icon for many of us in this diocese.

Remembering rightly: it's also our work today on Trinity Sunday. I confess. This is not one of my favorite Sundays to preach. It's quite a tall order to approach the throne of God, let alone craft words about the nature of that same God. All of our other doctrines about our faith flow from the doctrine of God. But there's a temptation, or maybe even an expectation, that on this day, preachers will remember correctly rather than honestly. This is what gives me pause for cause each year. Today is about remembering rightly, but honestly, it's also about admitting that such an act will always be incomplete, at least in this life. As St. Paul says to those headstrong Corinthians, for now, we humans see dimly through a mirror. That's a good thing. As one of my favorite theologians Karoline Lewis says, "once faith is boiled down to quick and succinct answers, it ceases to be faith."<sup>2</sup> Friends, I long to be faithful. I imagine you do, too.

That's what Jesus tries to get across to his companions on that fateful night so long ago. "I still have many things to say to you," Jesus says to his friends, "but you, my beloved, are not yet ready for those things." Each time I hear those words, there's a sadness in them. After all, in the Gospel narrative, just a few hours later, Jesus will be hanging on a cross. Those same companions will be lost in a fog created by their own complacency, disappointment, and guilt.

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<sup>2</sup>Karoline Lewis, "Trinity Musings," Working Preacher (June 10, 2019), <https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/trinity-musings> (accessed June 13, 2025).

But on this Trinity Sunday, there's also a deep hope in those words, too. Informed by Wisdom's abiding presence, you and I are invited to wonder with Her about the movement of God in our midst. Then, when it's time, that same steadfast presence of Wisdom sparks a readiness in us to reveal more of the truth about God to us.

What's hopeful is that Wisdom has been doing this work since the beginning of time. She's faithful that task not because we are hard headed or slow learners. Instead, it takes time, really an entire human lifetime, to begin to understand who God is and who we are in relationship to that same God.

Jesus knew this for himself. It was also one of his parting gifts to us. We don't have to have it all figured out, and that's a very good thing. If we did, there'd be no room for the Holy Spirit to do Her work in or through us. Instead, that same Spirit of Truth stands ready to embrace us and invite us into a deeper relationship when we are ready. That same Spirit of Truth does that for us as individuals and as communities. As that happens, we learn to trust each other more, to recognize our interdependence of each other, and the gift of that comes from steadfast presence with each other. Healthy communities celebrate and model those qualities. They are also some of the same qualities we attribute to and hope for the Triune God we worship.

Today is "gotcha day." The question is how. Maybe you feel like you need to give very particular responses to carefully crafted questions about God. Unless you respond, or believe, in a particular way, you worry about being caught off guard by those gotcha questions. I can relate to that a little today. Maybe you can, too.

But maybe today, there's also a deep peace knowing God's got us regardless of what we know, or think we know about that same God. If I'm honest, that's a much more life giving way to be invited into a relationship with God. Maybe you feel the same way, too.

What do we want to hold onto? An idol may be easy to grasp, but it leaves little room for doubt, let alone a faith that draws us into something greater than what's apparent only at the surface. Icons, on the other hand, invite us to leap through a portal where we can then marvel at something mysterious and far beyond our comprehension. Which is it for God for you: idol or icon? That is the question always before you and me.

Fellow theologian Shirley Guthrie astutely points out that, "God is no the prisoner of the Christian Church."<sup>3</sup> I would also argue that God is not held captive by our own belief systems either. Instead, our God longs to liberate us, so that we can be wholly and fully incorporated into the mystical body that is both in and beyond our knowing. How we respond guides our life of faith. It is also also your work at this point in the life of this beloved community at Saint Barnabas.

As we move into the long season of Ordinary Time, help us, Holy One, to embrace your wonder and expansiveness, both as a leap of and gift of faith. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup>Richard Boyce, "Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31: Theological Perspective," in *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 3 Pentecost and Season After Pentecost 1 (Prophets 3-16)*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 28.

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*[John 16:12-15: Jesus said to the disciples, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 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. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."]*