

**May 26, 2024 Holy Trinity**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**  
**“I wonder, I notice” with a Remembrance for Marge Perko**

**Isaiah 6:1-8, Psalm 29, Romans 8:12-17**  
**John 3:1-17**

**Grace and peace to you, beloved ones, in the name of the Creator, the Christ, and Spirit.**

**I’ve been on the look-out for a good scripture passage for an I wonder, I notice sermon.**

Juicy enough, a good story, things to unpack, curiosities, maybe some tension.

Some of you are familiar with this practice.

For others it’s new.

Let me explain: today we all get “in” on the preaching!

**You’ve heard the gospel read once already.**

In a few minutes I’ll read the passage again, slowly.

Your job is to interrupt me—and I mean it.

But don’t just randomly interrupt, **interrupt using a phrase that begins either**

“I wonder... (whatever you wonder).”

or “I notice...(whatever you notice).”

I’ll repeat what you say so that it’s amplified.

Also, if you are on Zoom, use the chat line.

Someone helping with tech will interject your wondering, your noticing.

After your holy interruption, someone else may jump in with something they wonder or notice,

or I’ll continue until another interruption arises.

**So today it may sound like this at the beginning,**

“Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jewish people...

I wonder what people thought about those who are Pharisees. OR

I notice Nicodemus is leader and might feel some pressure to believe or act certain ways.

**I’ll note that there are some particularly beloved passages within this story of Nicodemus today.**

I can imagine that one might feel strange wondering a loud about these.

I’m taking the liberty on behalf of the community to give you permission

to wonder and notice even about these familiar and beloved lines—

often this can bring even greater depth.

**Remember, only two rules...**

**1. There are no wrong answers, let the Spirit lead us.**

You may feel like you don't know enough, but really those can be the best interjections.

Your job is to engage.

**2. Use the structure.**

Begin with: I wonder... or I notice...

**Ready? Are your voices ready? My name is Jen; what's your name?**

**[READ John 3:1-17]**

**Others, still using the structure of I wonder and I notice?**

**Thank you!** I love to hear you wondering and noticing, particularly on a passage like this one.

I have a secret hope that you'll go home today, or maybe grab lunch,

that you'll keep wondering, you'll keep noticing,

that you'll let yourself be imaginative and curious and moved as you hear these Bible stories.

that the Spirit will keep stirring, as she has her way with us.

**You may be wondering: Why an "I wonder, I notice" sermon today, on Holy Trinity Sunday...**

I have a suspicion that many folks, even in a congregation like ours,

may feel some distance with the Trinity, may wonder about its relevance for our lives.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.

It's interesting to note that these are within the story of Nicodemus, and yet not in their trinitarian structure.

It's hard to know what to make of the Trinity.

Church schisms have started from less than this and the word heresy comes to mind.

**That said: There is much I love and appreciate about the Holy Trinity.**

Let me name one thing in particular.

I love that God, the Godhead, our God, the one we worship and glorify: is built on relationship.

The Holy Trinity is all about holy relationship, the three parts of one God,

in dynamic tension and dialogue, in relationship.

As created ones who live in relationship with one another and all creation,

having a God who is relationship... at the very core... is incredibly meaningful.

I chose for us to do an I wonder, I notice sermon today, on Holy Trinity Sunday,

because I wanted us to experience conversation as a community,  
center on scripture,  
hearts and minds and voices weaving,  
richer together than apart.

In a time when our communities and the world can be fraught and broken in so many ways,  
when it can be hard to risk and ask the big questions like Nicodemus,  
may the Trinity be an inspiration stay in relationship.

Thanks for venturing together.

**Before I close:**

**On May 15<sup>th</sup>, long-time Hope member, Marge Perko,** died in her sleep. She was 96 years old.

A memorial service this past Thursday and today we take time in worship to remember Marge, and to pray,

**Marge was born in in Herman, Minnesota**

the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 9 children on a farm without running water or electricity.

Education was important to her family and Marge became a voracious reader

until her later years when her failing eyesight made it harder for her to read.

**Marge moved to the Twin Cities as a young adult** and stayed with an aunt and uncle

in a boarding house operated by Eero Perko near Oak and Delaware,  
near the U of M hospital.

Often patients and their families stayed at the boarding house.

Marge and Eero were married and she joined him in taking care of the boarding house and it's people.

When the University Hospital bought the property to expand in 1957,

Eero and Marge moved to the house on 8<sup>th</sup> street where she lived until she died.

In more recent years, Marge has been the member who lived closet to the church.

**Marge and Eero had 7 children,** 3 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren.

**Her faith life was very important to her.**

Growing up, there wasn't yet a church in Herman.

When a circuit preacher wasn't available, her grandfather would hold worship at his home  
and conduct the service himself.

**Here at Hope,** Marge was a part of the Gloria circle, the quilting group,

and she regularly volunteered and made knitted goods to sell at the rummage sale.

**When members of this congregation die,**

we remember how the waters that first washed over them in baptism, hold them now in death.

We pray at the baptismal waters, linking ourselves to God's powerful waters of promise.

**Holy God, holy and powerful, we remember before you today our sister Marge Perko. We thank you for giving her to us to know and to love as a companion in our pilgrimage on earth. At the waters of baptism, you welcomed her into your love. At these waters, you comforted her in times of trouble and encouraged her in delight. At these waters, you now enfold her into Jesus' death and resurrection and the promise of life everlasting. Console us who mourn and bring us together to feast with all the saints of God. In the name of the holy one and holy three, holy relationship. Amen.**