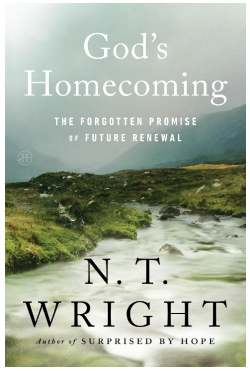
SERMON TAKE-HOME NOTES — May 31, 2026

"Going Full Pentecost, Part 2"



Recapping Part 1: I believe N.T. Wright is correct in his assessment that, beginning in the third century, Christians have gone deeper into getting the Bible's story wrong.

- The Hebrew scriptures, the "Old Testament," clearly are about God coming home to earth more fully in a way that fixes what human sin has messed up.
- Since the third century, Christians began to say that Jesus came to change that story. Under the influence of the philosopher Plato — who taught that the ultimate destiny for human beings is for our souls to leave our bodies behind at death for a more real existence — Christians have said that Jesus changed that Jewish story to one of believers going to home to heaven when we die.
- N.T. Wright thoroughly argues (convincing me!) that the New Testament teaches no such thing. In fact, the New Testament teaches that Jesus the Messiah brings the *fulfillment* of the Jewish story not a fundamental change of it.
- The New Testament presents Jesus of Nazareth as the Word made Flesh, God coming to dwell on earth with us for a little while (**Christmas**, the Incarnation), . . .
- living God's power of love and God's healing justice as a human being right in our midst (Jesus' three years of teaching and healing ministry).
- The Gospels and Christian scriptures then present sinful human beings reacting to God's presence in their midst by brandishing our own brand of violent power and justice by crucifying the Lord on **Good Friday**.
- God raises Jesus on **Easter**, launching the next phase of God's homecoming, . . .
- but it's not yet for God to stay in human form in our midst through Jesus. No, Jesus **ascends** back into heaven to make space for the next phase of God's homecoming, . . .
- namely, **Pentecost**, the poring out of God's spirit on all of us that we might begin to live God's power of love and healing justice in the world. It's the pouring out of God's Spirit on Pentecost which continues the story of God's homecoming by doing the work of making the creation ready for its completion, its fulfillment. God needs *us* to join that work.

Part 2 is Trinity

- Trinity is not a mistake like switching the story to be about our going home to heaven. It is the tweaking of our experiencing the one God not as the authoritarian One, but since Pentecost as the One-from-Many, *e pluribus unum*. God as One-in-Three persons helps us see God's self as a community of *collaboration* (the theme of our Synod Assembly this weekend), as the many who have God's spirit working together.
- Thus, we are to stand against authoritarianism to stand for *e pluribus unum*.

If I had to choose an illustration for what we've talked about this morning, I would again choose Minneapolis this past January. Masked federal agents terrorizing the citizens of Minneapolis is what authoritarian power and justice run amok looks like. The citizens of Minneapolis rising up against it, seeking to protect one another and caring for one another, is what Pentecost power looks like.

Siblings in Christ, as the threat of authoritarianism still looms large, it is what we are called to do and be as church community, as followers of the Trinitarian God, the One-from-Many, who stand against such violent human power and divisive justice in order to protect the most vulnerable and care for one another. So let us continue to do things like Thread-by-Thread Ministry, clothing our most vulnerable neighbors. But in these extraordinary times I firmly believe we are called to do more.