

Trinity and faith

Trinity Sunday

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; John 16:12-15

Mark Jeffrey, Methodist lay preacher, June 15 2025

Did you know that there have been no less than four industrial revolutions?

Revolution	Time Period	Key Technologies	Main Characteristics	Impact
First Industrial Revolution	Late 18th to early 19th century	Steam engine, mechanized textile production, ironworks	Mechanization of production using water and steam power	Shift from agrarian to industrial economies; rise of factories
Second Industrial Revolution	Late 19th to early 20th century	Electricity, internal combustion engine, telegraph, assembly line	Mass production, electrification, and communication advances	Urbanization, consumer goods boom, and global trade expansion
Third Industrial Revolution	Mid-20th century to early 21st century	Computers, semiconductors, internet, automation	Digital revolution: transition from analogue to digital systems	Rise of information economy, globalization, and service industries
Fourth Industrial Revolution	Early 21st century to present	AI, IoT, robotics, blockchain, biotechnology, quantum computing	Fusion of physical, digital, and biological systems; intelligent automation	Smart factories, personalized services, ethical and regulatory challenges, job transformation

Yes, we are living in the midst of the fourth industrial revolution. It's going on all around us.

It's amazing how fast people can adapt to this change, when it benefits them.

When they feel threatened by changes, things are harder. In 1900 in London there were perhaps 100,000 people whose work involved caring for horses. Within just twenty years, the arrival of cars and lorries meant that almost all of those jobs had vanished.

Early in July, the UN in Geneva will be hosting the annual AI for Good Global Summit, which I will be attending. It's a great event for seeing the good that technology is doing around the world, but also a forum for discussing the social and political questions that arise from the technology.

There's currently a lot of discussion in the news around the development of artificial intelligence (AI). This is an area of technology which will undoubtedly, have a profound effect on the way we do lots of things, as more and more of the decisions in our lives (or the choices we are offered) will be automated or handed over to machines. Perhaps for the first time, it's not just those who work with their hands who fear automation, but the so-called "knowledge

workers" too. The days of high-paid lawyers studying pages of complex contract language could soon be over, with AI able to scan a huge document and point out areas of legal concern within seconds. For some things, we now even have "smart contracts", where two computers can negotiate a binding legal agreement between themselves without needing any human to be involved.

AI can do a lot of very positive things. It can play chess better than a grand-master. It can rewrite a Psalm in a different style, or translate a document into another language (even into Klingon or Elvish). AI can fly a drone through a burning building looking for injured people. AI can predict the best times and places to spray insects to stop the spread of tropical diseases. AI can examine an Xray to look for cancer. Perhaps AI will eventually be able to predict volcanic eruptions or earthquakes in time to save lives and communities.

Powerful and helpful though technologies such as these are, we must be careful not to confuse intelligence (whether artificial or not) with wisdom (or indeed with knowledge). These are very different things.

A wise man once said

- Data is seeing a roundish red object
- Knowledge is knowing that it's a tomato
- Intelligence is knowing that a tomato is technically a fruit
- But wisdom is in knowing that you don't put tomato in a fruit salad

Problems arise when we have knowledge, but lack the wisdom to use it correctly. As we develop AI, it is essential that we have the wisdom to use it well, for the greatest benefit to the largest number.

As most of you know, I work for Microsoft, and in September I'll hopefully be celebrating 30 years with the company. In that time, I've got to know a lot of *really* intelligent people, at Microsoft and in other companies. Innovators on every level, bringing new ideas to life. But some of them have not always been wise. I've known very smart people to bet much of their savings that a stock price will continue to rise, only to get into difficulties when the market took a dive. Yes, even a very intelligent person can still be a fool sometimes.

Proverbs

Look to our reading from Proverbs, where wisdom calls out to us, urging us to listen and respond. It's written as if Wisdom itself is a character that is telling us its own story. One way to interpret this is that the speaker is the Holy Spirit himself (or herself, if you prefer). Proverbs 8:1-4 tells us that wisdom is shouting, craving our attention. This wisdom is not merely common sense or intelligence; it is a divine gift from God. King Solomon, known for his wisdom, reminds us that true wisdom comes from God. In verses 22-31, we learn that wisdom has been with us since the beginning of time, a fundamental part of God's character. It is eternal and always available to us. As we navigate our lives, we must seek this divine wisdom, opening all corners of our lives to God's direction and guidance.

Psalm 8

Next, we turn to Psalm 8 parts of which formed our call to worship earlier – a beautiful psalm that starts and ends with praise for the majesty of God. It paints a picture of creation, highlighting God's goodness, creativity, and power. Amidst this grandeur, human beings are

given a special place, crowned with glory and honor, and entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the earth. This psalm reminds us of our significance to God, despite the vastness of creation. It is a timely reminder of our duty to care for the environment and all living things. Ultimately, our significance is made clear through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who embodies the perfect relationship between humanity and God.

John

Finally, we should reflect on Jesus' words in John 16:12-15, where he promises that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. As we grow in our understanding, more of the complexities of life are revealed to us. Jesus reminds his disciples that their understanding will deepen, and the Holy Spirit will lead them into greater truth. This passage encourages us to remain open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizing that God's wisdom and truth are beyond our full comprehension.

Conclusion

As we celebrate Trinity Sunday amid this ever-changing world, let's remember the dynamic and relational nature of our God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are called to seek divine wisdom, care for creation, live for and love one another, and remain open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

To borrow from Adrian Plass...

- I love that I have a Father in Heaven who made me and loves me
- I love that I have a brother in Christ Jesus who understands me, loves me, and gave his life for me
- I love that I have the Holy Spirit to guide me, and carry my prayers, and to comfort and inspire me
- *and* I love that this is all a mystery, that keeps me thinking, questioning, and learning about God

In the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.