



Central Lutheran
MINNEAPOLIS

Genesis 1-11 Bible Study
“The Sovereign Call of God”

Wednesday Nights: 6:00 pm
Monday Mornings: 12 noon

Fall, 2018

Welcome

“In the beginning: God.” This is literally how the first words of the Bible are potentially translated, in the beginning: God. It is the statement of faith that God has been, is and always will be. Genesis is the story of God speaking so that all comes into being, including you and me. The sovereign call of God defines the first 11 chapters of Genesis. In three movements that follow we learn about the embraced call of God, the conflicted all of God and the hidden call of God, to use Walter Brueggemann’s categories.

For our part this fall, we turn our attention to the sovereign call of God and how that call defines what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ and members of the body of Christ, the Church. That all of this is in eleven chapters of scripture is amazing. So welcome to this holy conversation, God continues to call you, continues to create, save and make you holy, child of God.

The invitation

As always, the number one invitation is this: always, always come to class. If you did not have a chance to get to the reading, come to class. If you are away for a week, or two or even three, come to class. God is calling and inviting you to be a part of this holy conversation, so you are welcome at all of the sessions or the ones that you are able to attend.

The schedule

The lesson will be studied on Wednesday nights at 6:00 pm or on Monday at 12 noon. Both studies are open to all. The Wednesday night class will run for five weeks, and the Monday class will run a bit longer. There is one break in the schedule for the Wednesday class, we will not meet on October 31. Here is the schedule for Wednesday nights for you to note, the Monday crew will set their own schedule.

October

- 10 – Session One - Introduction to Genesis
- 17 – Session Two: Genesis 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-24 – the two stories
- 24 - Session Three: Genesis 3: 1 - 6:4 – Fall, Cain and Able and genealogy
- 31 – Halloween, No class

November

- 7 - Session Four: Genesis 6:5-9:17 – The flood
- 14 – Session Five: Genesis 9:18-11:32 – Restoration, genealogy and Babel

The class structure and weekly reading

Each class will begin with Christ Care Prayers, a time to lift up those in need and celebrate with those who have been blessed. You can share your prayers at the beginning of class out loud, or you can share them before class and they will include them by name or anonymously. The most important thing we do each week is gather and pray for one another, the needs of the Church and world.

Following the Christ Care Prayers, we will enter into holy conversation on the lesson for the day. Some weeks will begin with specific highlights to begin the conversation, other weeks the questions that were a part of the weekly reading will be our starting point. The conversation on the lesson will lead us to deeper questions, some from the lesson and some that you will bring. Again, like Christ Care Prayers, you can ask your questions out loud as we move along in the study or if you want you can write it down and share it with at the beginning of the class.

Generally, our conversations will be in large group, but occasionally a question is so important that we will need to turn to a neighbor to discuss before discussing it as a group.

Before the end of class, there will be a short introduction to the lesson for next week and highlight the possibilities for reading and daily work.

Introduction to Genesis

In the beginning God created....

What does this verse mean for you? What images does it evoke for you? What does it mean that God is the creator who creates, and you are the creature that is created?

Martin Luther summed up his insight in his explanation to the first article of the Apostles' Creed: I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, with these words.

I believe that God has created me and all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers. God provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all I need from day to day. God also protects me in time of danger and guards me from every evil. All this God does out of parental and divine goodness and mercy, though I do not deserve it. Therefore I surely ought to thank, praise, serve and obey him.

This is most certainly true.

What are the phrases or images in Luther's understanding of the creation that resonate with you?

How does it change the explanation if it begins with I trust that God has created me and all that exists?

The structure of Genesis 1-11

Genesis 1: Creation of the world

Genesis 2-3: Creation and Rebellion

Genesis 4: Expulsion of Cain

Genesis 5: Genealogy

Genesis 6-9: The Flood and New Creation

Genesis 9: 18-28 – Noah's Sons

Genesis 10: The Nations from Noah

Genesis 11: 1-11 – The Tower

Genesis 11: 10-20 – Genealogy – to Abraham

In Genesis 1-11 God calls the world into being. We enter the story to affirm that God's call is good, beautiful and true. In Genesis 12-50 God calls us to be the Church, just as God first called a special people to be faithful witnesses.

As Walter Brueggemann writes, Genesis "is concerned with the gifts given in these calls, the demands announced in them, and the various responses evoked by them." (Genesis, Interpretation).

At the heart of the call in the creation is for God to be faithful to and sustain the promise. God's promise is at the heart of Genesis, and so too the heart of all scripture. As God's children, our call is to listen together for the promise. We will certainly think about historical questions, perhaps specific literary images or the Lutheran law/gospel reading. The Bible is, at its heart, God's unfolding promise for you and me. Too often we can get bogged down in the history, the details or specific verses and lose the grand message of God's promise, love and mercy for us; and our call to live in the image of the One who created us – as icons of that same love, mercy and promise.

How might you define the promise of God for all?

October 17 Reading and Questions

Begin with time for your own prayers.

Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a and 2:4b - 24

If you want a daily devotional or daily study reading, read all or part of the lesson each day and then answer a question that opens the passage for you that day. If you are wanting to study the lesson in a larger block of time, read the lesson and then work through all the questions.

1. What caught your attention on this first read through? What was familiar and what was new?
2. How does God create in this first chapter of Genesis? What does it mean for you that “words create?” In your life, when do words create life and when do words destroy life? Write down some examples to share in class or with others.
3. Did you notice the rhythm in the lesson? How does each day begin and end, what are the words that set each day apart as God creates? How can our speaking and looking for the goodness in our lives and world be an act of faith? Spend the day aware of how your words create life and looking for the goodness of life.
4. Pick a specific day in Genesis 1 to read carefully. Why did you pick the day, what is created on that day? As you go about your life today, how can you notice all the aspects of this one specific day (for example, Genesis 1:14 might bring you outside at night to look at the stars)?
5. In Genesis 1 male and female are created simultaneously, in the image of God. What does that mean for you? What does it mean that we are created in the image of God? Note that it is proclaimed twice, which scholars think is for emphasis.
6. God blesses them. What does that mean for you, to be blessed by God? How are you blessed by God and what does that mean for your daily life? God gives the promise for them to be fruitful and multiply, and for dominion. This is a tricky word, for we hear it as control, but it means care, or stewardship. What is the tension between caring for the creation and abusing the gifts of the creation?
7. It is interesting that the chapter break, added over 2000 years later, divides the sixth and seventh days. What does God do on the 7th day? What does God also do for the seventh day? What does it mean that we are made to rest, receive

God's blessing and hallow the seventh day? We get the rest part, but what does it mean to receive God's blessing and to hallow the seventh day?

8. What was familiar to you in Genesis 2? In chapter two a specific creation story is told that concentrates on the Garden of Eden, and on the first man, Adam. What does it mean for you that the Hebrew word "adam" literally means "dust creature?"

9. Adam is lonely, but nothing can suffice except "bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh." What might it mean that his loneliness was not taken away because now there was someone to love him, but that now there was someone for Adam to love?

10. In both stories, of Adam and of the proverbial Eve, there is vulnerability and limitation. How are we closer to God and closer to who we are when we are vulnerable, when we embrace our limitations? By contrast, how does it work when we define ourselves by power, invulnerability or unlimited wants?

Class Session: October 17

Welcome and Christ Care Prayers

Overview of Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a and 2:4b - 24

The story of God told in Genesis 1-11, and then in chapters 12-50, is about a Creator creating creation. The subject is the Creator, the verb is that this creator, creates. The object is the creation, the creatures too, you and me.

What God promises is goodness, and in God's call is the tension that in the gift of the creation is embedded the ability to reject it all. Yet God is faithful, even as we are faithless.

Ephesians 1: With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

As Paul proclaims in the great letter about the Church, when the promise is in danger God intervened in Christ. God continues to intervene, to create, call and bless you and me.

Genesis 1:31 is a place to start, it is a statement of beauty and ethic in which you and I do not have a vote. We are surrounded by goodness, that even in our rejections that create chaos, God is patient and his compassion will win the day. We wait with patience (Romans 8:25) for the God who will not fail the promise of goodness.

A moment to ponder two distinct creation stories in the Bible: Genesis 1 and Genesis 2.

While it is confusing, it is important to note that these two lessons were recorded at two very different times in Israel's history, and the time period illuminates the themes in each of the lessons. You most likely can even determine these themes and their importance, now that you have spent some time in the lessons.

First, imagine that you are living at a time of such chaos and uncertainty, all it lost. To hear words of God's power and might, God's order and compassion, God creative goodness would lift your spirit. Such was the exile, after 587 BC. Which creation story would have brought hope?

Second, imagine a time of great power, when the rulers of the day had forgotten the ways of humility, limitation and vulnerability. What story would have been the corrective, particularly speaking to the pride and arrogance that we are capable of? Which would have called them back to relationships with God and one another, to our roles as help mates for one another?

Time to discuss the questions from the reading.

October 24 reading and questions

Begin with time for your own prayers.

Read Genesis 3: 1 – 6: 4 (concentrating on chapters 3 and 4)

If you want a daily devotional or daily study reading, read all or part of the lesson each day and then answer a question that opens the passage for you that day. If you are wanting to study the lesson in a larger block of time, read the lesson and then work through all the questions.

1. What was familiar to you in the lesson? How are we drawn to the question of vulnerability, once again? By contrast, how does it work when we define ourselves by power, invulnerability or unlimited wants?

2. Notice that the serpent is crafty in chapter 3:1. Prayer is speaking and listening to God. Adam and Eve began life in constant prayer, in constant speaking and listening to God. The serpent asks the first theological question: “did God actually say....” There is a tension here. It is important to discuss what God says, but what happens when we begin to speak for God, when we think we interpret God better than someone else? What does this lead Adam and Eve to do?

3. In chapter 3: 8, they hid from God, what follows is heartbreaking. God calls for them, they are afraid of the one who created them. Then, not wanting the blame, the man blames the woman and the woman blames the snake. How do we hide from God? How does fear lead to blame?

4. The tension in the lesson intensifies with the punishment. Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden, God’s promise is in danger – what will happen to the creation now? Read verse 21, a moment of compassion even in the punishment. What does God do? What does this mean for you?

5. Because humanity now knows, they cannot remain in the Garden of Eden. It is interesting that Adam will now “till the ground from which he was taken.” Rather than eternal life nourished by the tree of life, we live by generations of our human family trees. God passes on life, faith, blessing from generation to generation. How is this important to you, your history, generations and the blessings they have shared?

6. Genesis 3 ended with the flaming sword to guard the tree of life. God will bless God’s people through generations, rather than humanity sustained forever

by the tree of life. But what happens when the next generation is cut off by death and alienation? Do you hear the generational life in Eve's words in verse 1?

7. What is Cain's call and what is Abel's call? So, what do they each return as their first fruits offering to the Lord? What is Cain's response? How does the Lord respond to Cain?

8. Out in the field, what happens? Then, in one of the crucial lessons in the entire Bible, what is Cain's response to the Lord when he asks about Abel? What does the Lord ask Cain to do?

9. A second punishment now follows, what is the curse? But different from his parents, Cain laments to the Lord. How does the Lord respond?

10. The whole passage turns on a moment, repeated in every age. Return to verse 7: "sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it." This is the invitation of God. What does it mean to master it? Can we master the temptations? What does it mean that God speaks these words of comfort, you will be accepted; and, God speaks the words of warning, you must master it?

11. What does it mean for you that you are your brother and sister's keeper? How did Cain not listen?

12. What began in goodness has now turned to fear, anxiety, jealousy and murder. The promise of God is in danger. Yet we know that God will intervene. What does it mean for you that your brother, Jesus Christ, laid down his life for you? John reminds us of our life in God in his first letter when he writes: "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. ¹⁶We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us — and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (1 John 3:14-16)

Is love the way to master the sin that lurks at the door?

Class Session: October 24

Welcome and Christ Care Prayers

Overview of Genesis 3: - 6: 4

Genesis 3: 1-24, at its heart, is about a failure to trust. What happens to all of us when anxiety and fear get the best of us? Anxiety is doubt, doubt in God's providence and so seeking to secure our own future. The end is powerful proclamation: to trust God is life, to fail to trust in God is death. (Brueggemann)

Along the way, there is assigning blame and finger pointing. When we are confronted with anxiety and fear, do we return to God in trust or do we seek to blame and critique in an attempt to escape our part in the challenge?

Overview of Genesis 4: 1-6

Murder, plain and simple, is the sub-theme in Genesis 4. But what is the deeper theme?

In these first four chapters we have beheld the beauty of creation, the goodness of God proclaimed, the Lord's intimate connection with humanity, humanity's disastrous choice, the Lord's care, the restoration of family and now the first murder.

In an ancient pattern, the very question that Cain asks is the center of the lesson: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

So, are you? What does it mean to be your brothers/sisters keeper? How does this shape the way we live as the follower of Jesus Christ, as His Church and His people? While we may celebrate the ways we care for our brothers and sisters, it is the sin of omission that catches us every time. What are your omissions? What are our collective omissions?

Why? What stops us from deeply being our brothers and sister's keepers in deeper and deeper ways? Any insights from today's lesson that help open the conversation? What changes does the Lord call us to make in our modern world, spoken to us from this ancient Word?

Even though we fail to be the keepers of our brothers and sisters, we are not lost, are we? Cain carried a mark that protected him. We carry a mark that not only

protects us but empowers us to be the “marked people” together. How do you understand and live with the mark that you have been given?

One of the ancient spiritual disciplines is to “listen to your life.” God has been present for every breath you have taken and will be present to fulfill the promise of life when you take your final breath. Along the way, God has spoken, guided, graced, forgiven and renewed you. How so? As you listen to your life, how has God been the one constant from your birth to today?

When you consider the genealogy of your family, what are the triumphs and what are the catastrophes? How has God been at work in both, blessing and entering to restore the promise?

Are there people in your family history or in your own history that are “larger than life?” Did they pass on the faith, were they great heroes? Or are there parts of your family story that are train wrecks, and yet grace prevailed?

Time to discuss the questions from the reading.

November 7 reading and questions

Begin with time for your own prayers.

Read Genesis 6:5 – 9:17

Note: we do not meet next week, October 31, because of Halloween! You will see that it is a good thing, since this is a very detailed reading between classes.

If you want a daily devotional or daily study reading, read the assigned day and then answer a question that opens the passage for you that day. If you are wanting to study the lesson in a larger block of time, read all of the lesson and then work through all the questions.

Day 1: Genesis 6: 5-8

1. The Lord laments the creation; this is the beginning of the Lord's vulnerability, openness. How does this lament strike you?
2. What is more humbling than the thought of God's vulnerability and God's power – on display at the same time in these verses?

Day 2: Genesis 6: 9-22

1. "Blameless in his generation" and "walked with God" are the two images of Noah, what do they mean for you?
2. God established the covenant with Noah, which we hear in verse 18. What does it mean that this whole lesson is not about a flood, but about the broken heart of God?

Day 3: Genesis 7: 1-5

1. Noah enters the ark, is the pairing what you recall?
2. Can you imagine what was going through Noah's mind? What are some of the emotions and thoughts?

Day 4: Genesis 7: 6-10

1. How does this passage open up when illuminated by 1 Peter 3: For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you — not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

2. Is the gathering of animals more familiar in this passage? Why?
- Day 5: Genesis 7: 11-16
1. Does this seem to be an echo of the previous readings?
 2. Is more detail being added, such as the names of his sons, or is this another layer of the story?
- Day 6: Genesis 7: 17-24
1. Here is the judgment and listing of all that did not survive the flood. Note that it is not the flood that blots out, but God working through the flood. It is a difficult lesson to read. What emotions does it evoke in you?
 2. Only Noah, and those on the ark, is left. Does this judgment seem equal to the sin? One of the ancient questions is: why all creation, animals, vegetation, all? How do you get your mind around this question?
- Day 7: Genesis 8: 1-5
1. While we do not have class this Wednesday and Thursday, we arrive at the key moment on the lesson: "but God remembered Noah." There must have been moments in the flow of the story, certainly at day 135 or so, when Noah wondered if God had forgotten. Have you been there before, too? When was that, what was happening in your life? How did God intervene?
 2. There are lessons of a great flood in nearly every culture on earth. What does this mean for our reading of the flood story here in Genesis?
- Day 8: Genesis 8: 6-12
1. Is this passage familiar to you? What do you like about it? How does it give you hope?
 2. What is the pattern? What might this lesson teach us about patience in our overly hasty and often impatient world? Do we often get the first sign from God that we ask for?
- Day 9: Genesis 8: 13-19
1. This is a moment of new creation; it is a parallel to Genesis 1-2. A new garden is prepared by God for Noah, his family and every creeping thing. What are the emotions connected to this moment?
 2. What of God? What does this moment mean from God's perspective? What might be going on in the heart of God?
- Day 10: Genesis 8: 20-22
1. So, here is the big question: does the Lord repent when the Lord smells the pleasing odor of Noah's sacrifice? Is it a change of the Lord's heart?
 2. The Lord makes a series of promises, powerful promises. How do you hear them? How do they not set the Lord on the path that will lead to Jesus Christ?

Day 11: Genesis 9: 1-7

1. How does this echo Genesis 1 -2? What language gives the connection away for us?
2. Life is sacred again, how is this vision clearly communicated? How do you hear this lesson in the light of today's challenges – moral and political, global and local?

Day 12: Genesis 9: 8-17

1. This is the story of Noah's life after the flood. The sign is the rainbow in common culture, but the bow is really like a bow and arrow – and instrument of death. How does that change your reading, when you hear that God sets this bow in the sky, literally "hangs up his weapon of death?"
2. Does the sign of the covenant appear in the sky for us, or for God, or for all?

What about day 13 and day 14?

You have two options, one is to return to the whole lesson and read it through from beginning to end, making notes in the margin of your Bible that you would like to discuss in class. The second option is an old Bible study exercise related to Genesis 6-9. It is grounded in the reading of the lesson that acknowledges, like Genesis 1 and 2, that the Noah lesson was recorded in two distinct times and then merged together into one merged lesson. As we talked about with the creation stories, the Lord is used when they recorded the stories at 1000 BC in the time of great power, yet seeking intimacy with the Lord. God is used during the exile, after 587 BC when the people of Israel thought God has forgotten when God seemed powerless to them.

It is interesting to read the moments of the Noah lesson through the lens of the Lord, listening for the Lord's nearness, the Lord's broken heart. It is just as interesting to listen to God when the people needed a God who remembered and who had the power to do something to restore the promise.

So, with your pencil, read through Genesis 6-9 and circle the "Lord" and circle "God." Pay attention to these sections, and how they open us to faith passed on to us, a faith in the Lord who is tender and near, and a faith in God who remembers and has the power to restore the promise.

We will talk about some of these great transitions and woven together passages when we meet next.

"By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith."

Hebrews 11: 7



Class Session: November 7

Welcome and Christ Care Prayers

Overview of Genesis 6: 5 – 9: 17

Wow! How do we even begin to work through this amazing lesson for today? It is so familiar to us, and yet so often that familiarity tricks us. We think we know everything about the lesson, and it cuts us off from mature themes. We know it from Sunday School and so connect Noah and the Flood to arks, animals, flood waters, doves and rainbows. These are all certainly part of the lesson.

Deeper still, it is about the Lord, or God, and how deeply the sin, arrogance and downright wickedness of humanity deeply wounds the heart of the Lord. It is about God and that God remembers, after 150 days or 40 years God remembers. It is finally a lesson about the Lord who, repents, commits to never destroying the whole creation again, who has changed? There is a lot to discuss here!

Maybe we should begin with your questions, if you noted things in the margin. We can also talk about the Lord and God in the text, and how these help us

connect with Genesis 1-4, and certainly the recording of these oral lessons sometime around 1000 BC and then again after 587 BC – two very different times in Israel’s history.

No matter where our conversation takes us, all guided by the Spirit with joy and wonder, we cannot escape the moment recorded in chapter 8, verse 1:

“But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark.”



Time to discuss questions from the reading.

November 14 reading and questions

Begin with time for your own prayers.

Read Genesis 9:18 - 11:29

If you want a daily devotional or daily study reading, read all or part of the lesson each day and then answer a question that opens the passage for you that day. If you are wanting to study the lesson in a larger block of time, read the lesson and then work through all the questions.

Genesis 9:18 – 10:32

1. What does it mean that Noah is a man of the soil – is it a connection to Adam (the new earth creature)?
2. Too much wine, and the story parallels Cain and Abel, and Seth, in some ways. Read this lesson and compare to Genesis 4: 1-16. What themes are similar, where are they different?
3. What might it mean that there is this pattern that continues to develop: creation, fall, family disintegration, re-creation, fall and family disintegration?
4. But if God has promised that God will never flood the world, what options remain?
5. With chapter 10, we return to a genealogy, and with chapter 5 they function like bookends on the Noah story: 5 (genealogy), 6-9 (Noah and the Flood), 10 (genealogy). Why would the recorders of scripture have been inspired to set it up like this? How do the genealogies function?
6. Skim the genealogy, any names jump out at you? Why?
7. Again, how do we listen to our lives? How is the story of all your ancestors your story? How is faith passed on from one generation to the next? Or, more challenging, what happens when faith and its centrality in our lives is not passed on?

Genesis 11: 1-9

1. Notice that we are back in “the Lord” timeline, returning to the oldest sources in the Bible. Remember, that it was a time of great power for humanity, the greatest time of power of Israel. What were the temptations? Recall David, at the summit of his power, and how he killed to cover up his affair with Bathsheba? After a read through of Genesis 11: 1-9, how does this lesson speak to our human powers?
2. The problem that the Lord has is the promise, that God will never again destroy the earth or its creatures for the arrogance of humanity. What is the solution this time?

3. How does wealth, great cities, opportunities and human power all contribute to this lesson? So, what are the parallels to today? How is this lesson a warning for each of us, personally? How do you fall to the temptations of our human powers? How do these temptations pull us from God, from a life of faith in Christ Jesus and His Church?
4. Notice, though, that the Lord does not destroy humanity, but comes down to confuse, to scatter and yet to maintain unity. How does the Lord sustain unity? How does the Lord confuse and scatter?
5. While it is too easy of a connection, it is worth pausing to consider: in this time of great emergence, we are confused and scattered, aren't we? We have been here before, in previous times, like in the book of Acts. After the death of Jesus, and his new life, the early Church was gathered and then scattered. In the scattering, there was hope; there was a way forward in the midst of the confusion and challenge:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42

7. God is faithful. God remembers. God will not forsake the promise made to you in the waters of your baptism. What does this mean for you? How does the promise of God renew faith and our shared life as the Church?

Genesis 11: 10-29

1. Why is Shem picked up here, what is the connection from chapter 10: 31?
2. Symmetry is important in the Bible. There are 10 generations from Adam to Noah, and here we read of 10 generations from Shem to Abraham. Many scholars do not miss this parallel, that all of creation, and then all of history is moving toward Abraham and the chosen people, Israel. A small question: for you, is there a flow to history, a purpose within history?
3. Picking up on that, some big questions follow: if there is symmetry, a flow to history, what does that mean for us and our faith at this moment in time? How do we understand what part of the flow of history we live within?
4. Many scholars today think we are living in a turning point again (Phyllis Tickle, Diana Butler Bass, for example). Tickle wonders about the 500 year turns: Abraham and Sarah – David – Exile – Jesus - Gregory the Great – East and West Split – Martin Luther/ Reformation – Today... What does it mean at these turns?
5. Tickle says that at these turns the faith community goes through a “garage sale,” shedding off the past ways that did not work and beginning new possibilities that God has provided. The hard part she says, is how to live in faith during the “garage sale?”
6. What do you see around us today that indicate we are in the midst of a great sea change? What are the challenges? What do you fear?

7. What are the new beginnings that you see? What are the opportunities? How are you hopeful?



A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

²The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. ⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. ⁹They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

~ Isaiah 11

Class Session: November 14

Welcome and Christ Care Prayers

Overview of Genesis 9:18-11:29

First, the pattern, as we have moved through Genesis 1-11 together, have you seen this emerge?

Genesis 1: Creation of the world

Genesis 2-3: Creation and Rebellion

Genesis 4: Expulsion of Cain

Genesis 5: Genealogy

Genesis 6-9: The Flood and New Creation (8:1)

Genesis 9: 18-28 – Noah’s Sons

Genesis 10: The Nations from Noah

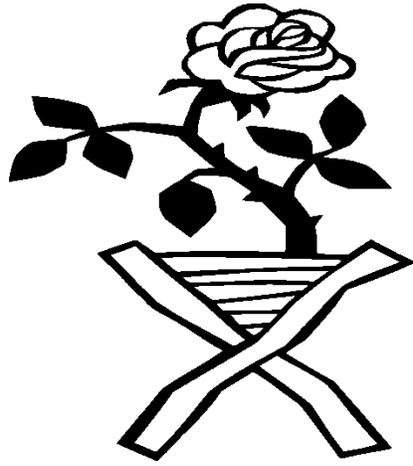
Genesis 11: 1-11 – The Tower

Genesis 11: 10-20 – Genealogy – to Abraham

Second, when we think of symmetry, patterns in life, what do you think? Is there a flow to life, both our personal life and to the great sweep of God’s history? Some say yes, and others say no – where are you at in this conversation?

If we open ourselves to the conversation that Phyllis Tickle offers in the Great Emergence, what does it mean that we are living in the “garage sale” time? It is one thing to live in a time of certainty, perhaps like the time after World War II when America rebuilt, the population exploded along with times of prosperity and economic expansion. It is another thing to live in a time of great change, diversity, changing economic landscape, world politics and changing social structure. In both, the Church faces challenges – neither are without the challenge (both how to share the faith in great growth and how to share the faith in unsettled times). How do you think about all this?

What does it mean to return to history, the sharing of the faith through the ages? Are we in a time that needs the fundamentals, as well as innovation? What might it mean to hold all this in tension, or balance? What is the call to faith today, is it both/and – rather than either/or - the complexity rather than easy distinctions?



Your questions? Our Spirit led holy conversation.... As we gather to devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, prayer, and in worship, the breaking of bread.

Thank you so much for being a part of this study, this holy conversation!

We will gather again in January and February for a study of the Gospel of Luke.