

Central Lutheran Church

Narrative Lectionary Bible Study

Fall, 2020

Welcome

The Central Lutheran faith community has followed the revised common lectionary for decades. As a quick reminder, lectionary is the fancy “church word” for the assigned readings for weekend worship. It is a common lectionary because it is used by Lutherans, Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and many other traditions. The revised (updated) common lectionary is a blessing, uniting people of faith around the world in a shared reading of Hebrew and Christian scriptures. You may also remember that the revised common lectionary followed a three-year rotation, moving through Matthew, then Mark and Luke, with John used for the big festivals of the year.

Several years ago, a narrative lectionary was developed with the goal of hearing lessons that we do not often encounter in the common lectionary. A secondary goal was to move through these lessons chronologically, beginning in Genesis and moving through to Revelation. In this second goal a congregation would “travel” through the history of God’s love for the world. Some would add a third goal, as a culture that is not deeply immersed in the Bible, it invites a congregation into the arc of the love of God from the first pages of the Bible to the final word.

We will return to the revised common lectionary, for all the reasons I noted above. For this year, and perhaps next, in the midst of this life changing pandemic, your rostered leaders felt a tug to use the narrative lectionary as a way to ground us in the shared story of God’s love from the beginning to the close of the Bible.

Attend Each Week, or When it Works

As always, these Bible studies are more holy conversations. No previous knowledge is expected, in fact it helps to seek to enter the study as if for the first time. You are invited to attend the Zoom study each week, but the invitation is always open for when it works in your schedule. Remember, always join the conversation, no matter if you had a chance to read the lesson for the week. For this study, your Bible will be helpful to have in front of you. The lesson will be

printed here, but often there are sections that are jumped over for the sake of space.

Christ Care Prayers begin each lesson, it is a time when we pray for one another and the needs of the world. If you have a prayer concern that you do not want to share in front of the group, you can send a private chat to the pastor who is leading the study.

For the class time on Zoom, we will break out into conversation groups. We learned over the summer that they can go well, or not so well. For this study, one of the pastors will be in each of the groups to help facilitate the conversation. We may randomly assign groups, or over time we may find it helpful to have set groups for a couple of weeks at a time. We share this to encourage you to be a part of the study and not let the thought of break out groups scare you away!

Thank you for joining this Bible study, these holy conversations.

Schedule

September 9 - Genesis 2: 4b-7, 15-17; 3:1-8 (Creation and "fall")

September 16 - Genesis 15: 1-6 (God's promise to Abraham/ Sarah)

September 23 - Genesis 37: 3-8, 17b-22, 26-34; 50:15-21 (Joseph's dreams)

September 30 - Exodus 12:1-3; 13:1-8 (Passover)

October 7 - Exodus 32: 1-14 (Golden Calf)

October 14 - 1 Samuel 1: 9-11, 19-20; 2:1-10 (Hannah and Samuel)

October 21 - 2 Samuel 7: 1-17 (David)

October 28 - 1 Kings 17: 1-24 (Elijah and the widow)

November 4 - Jonah 1:1-17; 3: 1-10; 4:1-11 (Jonah)

November 11 - Isaiah 6: 1-8 (Holy, Holy, Holy)

November 18 - Jeremiah 36: 1-8, 21-23, 27-28; 31: 31-34 (New Covenant)

November 25 - NO Zoom Study, Thanksgiving Weekend

December 2 - Joel 2:12-13, 28-29 (Merciful God, promise of Spirit)

December 9 - Isaiah 61: 1-11 (Spirit of the Lord)

December 16 - Luke 1:26-45, 46-56 (Annunciation and Magnificat)

December 23 - NO Zoom Study, Christmas break

December 30 - NO Zoom Study, Christmas break

January 6 - Zoom Study Resumes

Narrative Study for Wednesday, September 16

Welcome

Christ Care Prayers

Overview of the study and the narrative lectionary

Tonight's Lesson: Genesis 15: 1-6 God's Promise to Abraham and Sarah

A few things have happened in the book of Genesis since we left bible study last week. Generations of Adam and Eve's children have been a part of our story, and Noah, along with his wife and sons built the ark, filled it with the animals and lived in the midst of flood waters until God stopped the rain and sent the rainbow. And with that rainbow, God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and his family that God would never again flood the earth. The descendants of Noah multiplied and filled the land.

So, this we catch up with Abraham and Sarah who have already had quite a journey together. If you have time this week, go back and read from Genesis 12 to get the back story and we will pick up in chapter 15 where God promises Abram descendants as many as the stars.

This story calls our attention to the outlandish and surprising acts of God. The idea that Abraham and Sarah would have a baby well into their 90s is absurd and yet Isaac was born and the story of God's people continues. A few things stand out for us in this reading:

- God keeps God's promises
- Abraham trusts God
- God continues to be in relationship with Abraham, Sarah and their family

Lectio Divina

One of the oldest ways to enter into the holy conversation at a Bible study is to spend time reading the lesson slowly, and at least three times. This fall you will be invited to this way of reading called "lectio divina," or divine reading. You

can read the lesson silently, or even out loud if you are in a quiet place. There are many ways to engage in *lectio divina*, here is one way to consider:

1. The first time simply read the lesson for the information, the story that is being shared. At the end of the reading, what did you notice? What was interesting, or confusing? What was familiar or unfamiliar?
2. The second time, slow down and perhaps circle words that stay with you or even underline a sentence that jumps out at you. Here you begin to read with your heart, along with your mind. What emotions do you notice as you read and respond or react to the lesson?
3. The third and final time, really slow down. Perhaps you pause or stop at a verse, linger there. Here you begin to read with your soul. What is God or the LORD GOD saying in, with and under this story? What is God or the LORD GOD not saying, in other words, is God speaking or does it seem more like human interpretation at this point. What is liberating or what is troubling? How are you open to God as you pause for this third reading?
4. Be sure to write down what you may have learned and the questions you may have at this point. Note what emotions were stirred up and what you may want to ponder. Note how the lesson draws you to God, how are you opened or where are you restless.

Genesis 15: 1-6

God's Covenant with Abram

15 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ²But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." ⁴But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." ⁵He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Conversation and Questions

1. What did you notice? What was interesting, or confusing? What was familiar or unfamiliar?
2. What emotions did you notice as you read and responded or reacted to the lesson?
3. What is God or the LORD GOD saying in, with and under this story? What is God or the LORD GOD not saying, in other words, is God speaking or does it seem more like human interpretation at this point. What is liberating or what is troubling? How are you open to God as you pause for this third reading?
4. What questions do you bring tonight for us to discuss?