

Central Lutheran Church

Narrative Lectionary Bible Study

Fall, 2020

Welcome

We are off and running on our weekly Zoom Bible study, rooted in the narrative lectionary. A few quick reminders, if needed:

1. The narrative lectionary was developed with the goal of hearing lessons that we do not often encounter in the common lectionary. This year we will “travel” through the history of God’s love for the world.
2. 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.
3. You are invited to attend the Zoom study each week, but the invitation is always open for when it works in your schedule.
4. 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.
5. Yep, we will break out into conversation groups. Have no fear, one of the pastors will be in each of the groups to help facilitate the conversation.
6. 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, November 4

Welcome

Christ Care Prayers

Overview of the study and the narrative lectionary

Tonight's Reading: Jonah 1:1-17; 3: 1-10; 4:1-11 Jonah

Jonah is both the most reluctant prophet and the most successful prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures. He is given a job that he doesn't want to do. He has a whole list of perfectly good reasons to run the other way when God comes calling. God is trying to send him to Nineveh to warn the folks there about their bad behavior. Jonah's people and the people of Nineveh are enemies and have been for quite some time. He doesn't want to walk east to warn the Assyrian king about anything, so he gets onto a boat in Joppa and buys a one way ticket for as far as he can imagine in the opposite direction, Tarshish.

God is very involved in the weather on the Mediterranean Sea surrounding Jonah's trip and a storm is sent. The sailors figure out that Jonah is the problem and with his permission they throw him overboard. God also appoints a big fish to swallow Jonah and he remains there for three days and three nights. Jonah

prays a beautiful prayer of remembrance for all the ways God has saved his life. God speaks to the fish and Jonah is spewed out upon the dry land.

After all this, Jonah goes to Nineveh, tells them their wrong and they repent. He merely speaks his truth as he spends a day walking from one end of the city to the other and everyone believes the word of the Lord in Jonah's mouth and they fast and put on sackcloth and ashes, even the king.

So God changes God's mind and doesn't bring about the calamity that God had planned for them. They are saved, and that makes Jonah mad. He wants to see his enemies beaten down and destroyed. He doesn't want to be the mouthpiece of God so that people he hates are saved. He wants them to get what he thinks they deserve. And God is gracious and merciful and that's not what Jonah wants. At the end of the book God basically tells Jonah that he's being petty and should care more about people and creation and the ways God gives life.

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.

Jonah 1:1-17; 3: 1-10; 4:1-11

Jonah

Chapter 1

¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, ²Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me. ³But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

⁴But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. ⁶The captain came and said to him, "What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish."

⁷The sailors said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸Then they said to him, "Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" ⁹I am a Hebrew, he replied. "I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." ¹⁰Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them so.

¹¹Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. ¹²He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you." ¹³Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. ¹⁴Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, O LORD, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man's life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you." ¹⁵So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. ¹⁶Then the men feared the LORD even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

¹⁷ But the LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the

belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Chapter 3

1The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, 2Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you. 3So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. 4Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

6When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. 8Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. 9Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish."

10When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

Chapter 4

1But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. 2He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. 3And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." 4And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" 5Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

6The Lord GOD appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. 7But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. 8When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live." 9But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." 10Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into

being in a night and perished in a night. "And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

Conversation and Questions

1. What questions does this story bring up for you? What did you notice for the first time in this reading?
2. How do these stories make you feel? Notice your body when you read it, are there places you are holding the tension? Where are the moments of release in these stories?
3. How is God present in these stories? What do you hear God saying to you through these stories? What do you hear God saying to our whole community?
4. What more do you want to discuss with others about these stories? How are you called to integrate or share what you have learned?