

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; 13:1-10 (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, December 2, 2020

Welcome

Christ Care Prayers

Overview of the study and the narrative lectionary

Tonight's Lesson: Joel 2:12-13; 28-29 Merciful God, Promise of Spirit

Our text for this week a two-point stop in the book of Joel. If you have time, read through the entire book; it's only three chapters. There is powerful imagery – some of which gives us pause, but listen carefully for words we have heard before.

Joel is a prophet of the Post-Exilic Period – a time when the Israelites have returned to Judah and are no longer living in captivity. The challenge to the Israelites at this point is natural – famine, drought and locusts (maybe just a metaphor?). The Israelites are not suffering at the hands of other humans; they are challenged by nature itself. And, as many of us are experiencing right now, we wonder what the appropriate response is when we have little or no control over our circumstances.

To whom do we turn? To whom shall we go? Joel tells us that we are to turn, or perhaps return, to God. The entirety of creation is called to pivot and remember God's promise, God's presence and God's character. Turning to God gives the community a common center – a sacred and holy place to direct our energy and attention with love for God and love for the neighbor which brings about God's spirit for all.

This is a fascinating text for us amid what the world is experiencing right now.

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.

Joel 2:12-13; 28-29

¹² Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
¹³ rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.

²⁸ Then afterward
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
²⁹ Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

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?