

09-03-2023 Worship Service

Genesis 1:1-2 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

Genesis 12:1-2 The LORD said to Abram: Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I Samuel 8:1, 3 Now when Samuel got old, he appointed his sons to serve as Israel's judges... But Samuel's sons didn't follow in his footsteps. They tried to turn a profit, they accepted bribes, and they perverted justice.

Isaiah 7:10-14 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: "Ask a sign from the LORD your God. Make it as deep as the grave or as high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I won't ask; I won't test the LORD."

Then Isaiah said, "Listen, house of David! Isn't it enough for you to be tiresome for people that you are also tiresome before my God? Therefore, the Lord will give you a sign. The young woman is pregnant and is about to give birth to a son, and she will name him Immanuel.

Luke 4:14-19 Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

Matthew 5:3-12 – VT #295 – I'll read the light print, you all read the bold...

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Luke 23:44-49 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man. When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Luke 24:1-12 Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. They didn't know what to make of this. Suddenly, two men were standing beside them in gleaming bright clothing. The women were frightened and bowed their faces toward the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He isn't here, but has been raised. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Human One must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words. When they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. Their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn't believe the women. But Peter ran to the tomb. When he bent over to look inside, he saw only the linen cloth. Then he returned home, wondering what had happened.

Acts 1:1-2 Theophilus, the first scroll I wrote concerned everything Jesus did and taught from the beginning, right up to the day when he was taken up into heaven. Before he was taken up, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus instructed the apostles he had chosen.

2 Thessalonians 3:3-5 But the Lord is faithful and will give you strength and protect you from the evil one. We are confident about you in the Lord—that you are doing and will keep doing what we tell you to do. May the Lord lead your hearts to express God's love and Christ's endurance.

Revelation 21:1-5a Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her

husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne say, “Look! God’s dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Then the one seated on the throne said, “Look! I’m making all things new.”

Message -- **The Big Picture** – Introducing the Narrative Lectionary Pastor Lois Harder

How many of you have a memory of a pastor (or pastors) who seemed to have a favorite scripture text or maybe a favorite sermon topic that they repeated often? It’s not hard to understand why that would happen – the Bible is a big collection of books and there’s a LOT in it, so it can be a real challenge to figure out what to preach on every Sunday. One familiar recommendation is, when you preach (or when you pray), hold the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. In other words, the Bible is foundational guidance from God for our lives and the newspaper is the venue that keeps this guidance real – especially in Marion County. So, that’s a helpful tip to remember, but still... the Bible is a big collection of books and there’s a LOT in it! So where does one start?

Well, one might start with a lectionary. A lectionary is a book or a list that contains a collection of scripture passages that have been chosen for a given day or occasion. There are ancient lectionaries that go back to the early church. Having a lectionary has been a way for pastors to help keep the Bible in front of their congregations – to try to keep it relevant and fresh as the guidance from God that we all need. As the years and decades and centuries go by, the challenge of keeping the Bible relevant has not necessarily gotten easier. So, we’re still using lectionaries and there’ve been lots of updates and adaptations and new lectionaries introduced.

The Narrative Lectionary is the most recent one that I’m aware of. It offers a broad, big-picture sweep of the whole Biblical story rather than just taking short snippets from individual stories. So, with that in mind, for this introductory time, I’ve asked Nancy to read from several passages from Genesis to Revelation that give us a taste of this “Biblical survey”. And after she reads, Delton will show us a 5 and a half minute video called “The Story of the Bible”.

If you’re interested in watching that “next video” you can look for it on [The Bible Project.com](http://TheBibleProject.com)

A narrative is a story. In 2010, two professors at Luther Seminary thought that it was becoming increasingly important for preachers to be able to tell God’s story in ways that people could relate to and, therefore, find themselves in. So they thought that in order to do that, they would suggest using a longer portion of scripture – a whole story that’s set in its context, rather than sort of “cherry picking” smaller bits of multiple stories and then somehow trying to weave

them together. This was a bit of a critique and what they felt was an improvement to the Revised Common Lectionary that's been in use across many denominations since about 1992.

They also thought that a four-year cycle of reading scripture could be helpful because, for one thing, then each of the four Gospels gets its own, focused time of study. The Common Lectionary uses a three-year cycle with emphasis on Matthew, Mark and Luke, the so-called synoptic Gospels whose stories are more similar to one another and then, the quite different and much later Gospel of John appears sort of "mixed in" with the other Gospels at specific times.

Another significant thing about the Narrative Lectionary is that it follows the North American school year, so it starts the first Sunday after Labor Day (next Sunday) and it goes through Pentecost which, this next year will be May 19. This seems to be a schedule that aligns better with the real lives of people in our cultural setting rather than starting on the first Sunday of Advent and going through Christ the King Sunday at the end of November. This way the Old Testament stories are studied in the autumn, ending with the prophetic call for a Messiah, leading into Advent with the Gospel narrative of Jesus, which continues on through the second Sunday of Easter. The stories then go on from the Acts and the Epistles. There are additional readings throughout the summer.

There are pros and cons to any lectionary or pre-determined list of scriptures to read and preach from. No matter which list one chooses, we don't hear every verse or story that's in the Bible! But hopefully we do begin to hear patterns, similarities, repeated lessons and examples but told in different ways. Indeed, that is the task of good storytelling. I think I've shared with some of you that fairly early on in our years at Lorraine Avenue I was struggling to prepare a sermon on a Saturday evening and I thought to myself, "I've preached like 10 sermons and I don't have anything else, new to say!" But that's the challenge, isn't it? As long as we're alive and paying even a little bit of attention to what's going on around us, with the help of The Spirit, we can find new and helpful ways for God's story to impact our story. But to do that, we have to keep hearing the story until we know it so well that it can inform our lives and bring us to a deeper faith.

The Narrative Lectionary is another tool to help us learn God's Big Story of Grace and Salvation. And as we keep hearing it and become ever more familiar with it I hope we'll be able to find and incorporate ourselves into it so that we can be equipped by it to face our own "trauma, economy, politics, family"... our reality! I trust that the Holy Spirit will be present with us, guiding and encouraging us as we learn, giving new insights and perspectives, making contemporary connections through the truths in the age-old stories.

Next Sunday we'll start at the beginning the Genesis, in the Garden.