



GETTING TO KNOW THE
BOOK THAT GOD HAS
GIVEN US!



TRINITY
ANGLICAN CHURCH
of Thomasville, Georgia



June 2008

Dear Friends,

Over the next 20 weeks we are going to share an adventure. We will be familiarizing ourselves with the Bible through Scripture Union's Essential 100 program. We will all read 100 passages that will give us an overview of the essence of the Bible's content. I'm looking forward to seeing what God will do in our midst as we open ourselves to His Word.

As Anglicans Scripture is important to us. Two reasons are given in the affirmation that every deacon, priest and bishop made at our ordinations: "I solemnly declare that I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation." What remarkable claims! First, Scripture is "the Word of God." This collection of stories, songs, prophecies, and letters, written by human hands over hundreds of years is God's direct communication to us. The Bible is more than a dusty collection of religious memorabilia. It is alive. It speaks to us today as a message from God.

Secondly, Scripture reveals "all things necessary to salvation." Everything necessary to experience a restored relationship with God is in the Bible. There may be many things that you can learn from other books. But this Book is the one through which God reveals and brings us into salvation.

Thirdly, the Scriptures provide the background for understanding everything that we do in worship on Sundays. The liturgy is the Bible filed by title. The liturgy constantly points to (without fully telling) the great stories of Israel's history and of our redemption through the work of Christ. (It's like going to a family reunion and having folks "tell" stories by just referencing them – "Remember Uncle Bob's fishing trip?") The priest breaks the bread and pronounces "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." To fully appreciate what we believe is happening there, one needs to know the family story; a story that includes the Old Testament sacrificial system, the Passover and all that "Christ" ("Messiah," "Anointed One") means. The more we know about the Scriptures, the more deeply we appreciate the liturgy.

Finally, Scripture makes a practical difference in our lives. It is a light for our path (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23), keeps us from sin (Ps. 119:9-11; Mt. 4:1-11), is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16) and gives hope and encouragement (Rom 15:4).

While we might refrain from "hitting people over the head" with our Bibles and using verses plucked out of context to make our points, we need to be a people grounded in the Scriptures. It is my prayer that the next weeks will be revolutionary in our individual lives and in our life together as families and as a church community.

May God meet us on every page!

With you in God's story,

Fr. Jim and Mtr. Shari

In The Beginning

Week 1—June 8-14

This week's reading has four major events: creation, fall, flood, and the Tower of Babel. It is the story of God blessing his creation, the human race forfeiting that blessing and God preparing the way for salvation.

Memory Verse: Genesis 1:1

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Readings:

1. Creation: Genesis 1:1-2:25
2. The Fall: Genesis 3:1-24
3. The Flood: Genesis 6:5-7:24
4. God's Covenant w/Noah: Genesis 8:1-9:17
5. Tower of Babel: Genesis 11:1-9

God said.....and it was brought into being. With unimaginable power what we know as creation was begun. And God saw that it was good. Being made in His image, we have a small piece of that power. Can our words create something we can call good? I believe they can. If I will apply it, this acrostic can guide my words.

T – is it true?

H – is it helpful?

I – is it insightful?

N – is it necessary?

K – is it kind?

And I would add, is it to God's glory? Too many times I have made a true statement that was neither necessary nor kind, or offered an opinion that was neither insightful nor helpful nor to God's glory.

Good Lord deliver us.

Our words can create peace instead of strife, comfort and strength instead of discouragement, building up instead of tearing down. We can express truth not deceit, humility not pride, love not hate. Not one of God's words was spoken carelessly. We also have that power to think and choose carefully what we say.

Let us pray that God's Spirit will guide our speech so that we will create an atmosphere that will manifest Jesus to our community, inside and outside of Trinity Anglican Church, an atmosphere we can call good.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Week 2—June 15-21

Following a single family line (the patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), God unfolds a plan to bless his covenant people and through them all nations.

Memory Verse: Genesis 12:2,3

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you... all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

Readings:

6. The Call of Abram: Genesis 12:1-20

7. God's Covenant w/Abram: Genesis 15:1-21

8. Isaac: Birth/Sacrifice: Genesis 21:1-22:19

9. Jacob/Esau Compete: Genesis 27:1-28:22

10. Jacob/Esau Reconcile: Genesis 32:1-33:20

“Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you,” Gen 28: 16.

We know how these stories end, but that doesn't remove their drama. We've sung "Father Abraham had many sons." But at the start of this story, nothing is certain. God's servant tries to be obedient, yet still it all seems so improbable. God used people, regular folks like us, to establish His nation. This was the family His own son was going to be born into.

The establishment of God's people, the nation of Israel, was not accomplished in one generation. Men and women of God answered His call, often stumbling as they tried to follow, but God was still there, waiting to fulfill his covenant with the people.

Over and over we see a blessing promised and bestowed. How stunned Abraham must have been to hear that the gift from God, the tangible proof of His covenant, was to become the sacrifice. Jacob received the coveted blessing from his elderly and infirm father, and as a result had to flee his family and all he knew. But these men and their families still were guided by God's promises.

We, too, each have gifts given by God for God's purpose. His purposes are not just for a single generation. The gift may become the sacrifice, hopefully never in the sense that Abraham was called to place his son on the altar. But if God is going to use our gifts, there must be that time when we say, like Abraham, "Here I am. Here is my treasured gift; I am willing to give my plans and my dreams to you."

The Story of Joseph

Week 3—June 22-28

The patriarch story continues with Joseph. Because of famine the people of Israel move into Egypt.

Memory Verse: Genesis 50:20

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Readings:

11. Sold into Slavery: Genesis 37:1-36

12. Prison/Promotion: Genesis 39:1-41:57

13. 10 Brothers to Egypt: Genesis 42:1-42:38

14. The Brothers Return: Genesis 43:1-44:34

15. Joseph Revealed: Genesis 45:1-46:7

Consider for a minute this chain of dependencies.

- For humankind's relationship with God to be healed, God had to send his Son in the flesh to die and redeem us.
- The Messiah was to be born to the line of David, Jacob, and Abraham.
- The line of David, Jacob, and Abraham had to survive the seven year drought. Food had to be stockpiled to provide for them. The line had to have access to the food ahead of the multitude of people stricken in the famine.
- Access was granted by a member of the family who had control over all the stores of Egypt.
- The family member would not have had access if he had not been sold into slavery, taken to Egypt, falsely accused of a crime, thrown into prison, interpreted dreams for someone who would have personal contact with Pharaoh.

The family member would not have been sold into slavery and taken to Egypt if he had not been willing to allow God to use him in ways that put him at odds with family and the world. He was willing to be set apart.

So, while it is true that what was intended by man to harm was instead intended by God to accomplish good, the good turned out to be much greater than just the saving of many people from starvation. It also was a link in the chain that provided the bread of life to end the spiritual famine of mankind.

Things to ponder

- The orthodox parishes / priests (Joseph?) who have been cast out by TEC, who are still part of the line of succession from Peter, (Joseph's family?). These parishes have been taken in by Uganda (Egypt?) who has been building a store of the true and lively Word, so that now the Word can be returned by the outcasts to a world that is starving for truth.
- Did Trinity leave our house and family ... ("Sell all you own, give it to the poor...and follow Me" Mark 10:21) so that we can be part of bringing the bread of life to a starving part of Thomasville? A part that no one else will feed? Remember - Egyptians could not even eat with Hebrews.

Are my personal trials and circumstances, just a cleansing and preparation for something? If God calls me to act in ways that set me apart from family and community norms, will I say "Here am I"?

Prayer

Where you go, Lord, I will follow. Where you send me, I will go. Here am I.

Moses and the Exodus

Week 4—June 29-July 5

From Joseph we turn to Moses. We see God's people suffering in slavery and then God's grace and power demonstrated in the deliverance of his people.

Memory Verse: Exodus 3:15

The Lord, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham... Isaac... and Jacob has sent me to you. This is my name forever.

Readings:

16. Birth of Moses: Exodus 1:1-2:25

17. The Burning Bush: Exodus 3:1-4:17

18. The Ten Plagues: Exodus 6:28-11:10

19. Passover and Exodus: Exodus 12:1-42

20. Crossing the Red Sea: Exodus 13:17-14:31

A devotional from **Mandy Flowers**

God arms us with what we need in order to do what he asks. God chose a slave child to lead his people out of captivity and into the Promised Land. We, too, were born slaves and are led into freedom. God wants us to know Him and trust Him.

Moses was a real man but symbolically, he was EVERYMAN. Then is now.

Although larger in number than the Egyptians, had the Israelites become complacent in their surroundings and failed to notice, until too late, that they had become enslaved to a group of idol worshiping people that had no fear of the living God? It continues today.

Exodus 1:1-2:25

What does one do when he or she has no control over the situation?

I can only imagine how the mother of Moses must have felt when she was told that her latest child was a boy, knowing that Egyptian law was going to require that she have him killed. How her heart must have ached with the knowledge that, without a miracle occurring, he was doomed to death. What were the conversations and prayers that led to her resourcefulness: I would imagine that she prayed for wisdom and discussed possibilities with her family. What could she do to save this child?

What do we do when we have our backs against the wall? Pray! Pray that God gives us His wisdom to use the resources, skills and knowledge He has given us and the faith to hand them back to Him. Our Mosses' may not be retrieved from the river but we have the certainty that, we have armed God with all we have and the battle is His.

Exodus 3:1-4:17

Moses was minding his own business following his daily routine, taking sheep out to graze when out of a burning bush, God called. Instead of going to see a burning bush, Moses was getting ready to have an encounter with the Creator of the universe; the day and time for this meeting had been set. Moses, even knowing that he was in a meeting with THE GOD, was unable to trust. He feared his limitations and inadequacies even while in conversation with God. "Surely, God, if you knew THAT about me, we would not be having this discussion."

How often do we think we are going to do one thing, only to find out that we are there for a totally different reason? Do we continue with our plan or do we investigate the "burning bush?" Do we miss our opportunity to meet with God? Do we, once we know what we are asked to do, give God all the reasons why we can't do it? Does fear of failure prevent us from trusting God?

The first plagues point to man's resistance and stubbornness towards God. The last plague and the parting of the Red Sea continue the underlying message of Scripture. We are all born slaves. God wants us to be free and gives us the path to that freedom through a relationship with Himself by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

The Law and the Land

Week 5—July 6-12

This week's section continues the story of Moses in the desert with the people of Israel. He receives the law. The people experience both true and false worship. Joshua succeeds Moses and leads the people into the promised land.

Memory Verse: Exodus 19:5-6

If you obey me fully and keep my covenant...
you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Readings:

21. 10 Commandments: Exodus 19:1-20:21

22. The Golden Calf: Exodus 32:1-34:35

23. Joshua Follows Moses: Joshua 1:1-18

24. Crossing the Jordan: Joshua 3:1-4:24

25. Fall of Jericho: Joshua 5:13-6:27

After reading the passages for this week, I can see how essential this section of scripture is to our knowledge of God's character. It is an example of how merciful and faithful God is, even when we fall short of His glory.

In a time when the people of Israel had the opportunity to see God speak with Moses on the mountain and receive his commandments, the Israelites were still quick to worship idols in his absence. But after the iniquity, God kept his promise to the people because he is a faithful God. He had given them His perfect law to obey and even when they had broken it, He did not go back on his word to deliver them to the promised land.

This reminds me how undeserving I am of his promise of grace and how blessed I am to have received it. God has made a lot of promises to us as a body of Christ; promises not only for provision and prosperity, but for abundant and eternal life if we seek after him. So, as the body, we can learn from the mistakes of the Israelites, and know that we also one day will have our promised land.

The Judges

Week 6—July 13-19

Spanning a period of 300 years, this section tells the story of charismatic military leaders whose chief function was to deliver Israel from its enemies. Notice the cycle of sin, crying to God and deliverance that we see in these stories.

Memory Verse: Judges 5:31

May all your enemies perish, O Lord!

But may they who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength.

Readings:

26. Israel's Disobedience: Judges 2:6-3:6

27. Deborah Leads Israel: Judges 4:1-5:31

28. Gideon/Midianites: Judges 6:1-7:25

29. Sampson/Philistines: Judges 12:1-16:31

30. Story of Ruth: Ruth 1:1-4:22

These heroes of the Bible were all obedient to God. Often they were not as strong as their enemies and doubted their ability to deliver Israel as the Lord told them to do, but when they trusted, they were strengthened. Gideon even asked for proof from God that he had heard what the Lord commanded. Then the Israelites attacked the Midianites and won their freedom. In all the readings, we see the Lord rewarding his people when they returned to him, even when they had sinned and strayed.

These familiar stories encourage us to remember that the Lord is faithful, forgiving us and even rewarding us when we turn back to Him. These were genuine heroes - Spiderman pales in comparison - real people who faced frightening odds, yet prevailed.

They made me think back through the years that I have been a Christian about my own personal heroes. One was a tiny wizened woman - she stood a few inches over four feet - who was a deaconess in the Episcopal Church. She attended church in her gray habit, circulating after the service, to capture parishioners with stories of people she knew who were in need.

The church provided her a tiny mission "on the wrong side of the tracks" where she lived in one bedroom and cooked in an outdated kitchen for anyone who came to Saint Faith's House. When I was in high school, she engaged me to read and entertain small children while she consulted with their parents.

Now I realize some were abused women, some were men who had lost their jobs and their hope, and some were alcoholics trying to overcome their addictions. Deaconess Guilliland was not a popular person. She was always asking for things - your time - your money - your prayers.

I remember with admiration her courage and determination, her gentle spirit, her belief in mankind. I'm thankful to have known a true hero.

Will any of us be regarded as heroes or mentors in the hearts and minds of those we meet at the mall or the post office or the grocery store? I pray the Lord will make His will known to us as a church and as individuals.

The Rise Of Israel

Week 7—July 20-26

This section begins Israel's rule by kings. Beginning with Saul and his failure as a king, we read about David's fugitive life as a king-in-waiting before the throne is his and he rules over all Israel.

Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 1:27-28b

I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord.

Readings:

31. Samuel Listens: 1 Samuel 1:1-3:21

32. King Saul: 1 Samuel 8:1-10:27

33. David and Goliath: 1 Samuel 16:1-18:16

34. David and Saul: 1 Samuel 23:7-24:22

35. King David: 2 Samuel 5:1-7:29

While outstanding examples of faith abound in this section (especially Hannah, Samuel, David and Jonathan), the character that I find most intriguing (and tragic) is Saul. He is called by the Lord to be king of Israel; but only because Israel has rejected the Lord as their king. He is handsome and tall – “a man’s man”; but is found hiding among the bags when it is time to step into his leadership role. By the power of God’s Spirit he delivers God’s people from the oppression of their enemies; but ends up dying on a hill surrounded by Philistines. He invites David into his home; but tries to kill him – even hunting him down in the wilderness. He unifies the tribes under his leadership; but is consistently shown to be petty, jealous, fearful, vengeful, and disobedient. Israel’s first king is a complex mess.

Saul’s story both encourages and challenges me. If God can use Saul to accomplish His will, He can use me. At the same time, however, Saul’s rejection by the Lord causes me to stop and reflect on my own life. Am I walking in obedience to God’s word? Or am I fudging and compromising? Am I depending on God’s power and might? Or on my strength and wisdom? Am I willing to see God raise up other people into successful ministry? Or am I concerned about my own place and prestige?

Saul’s is the story of a promising leader that never lived up to his potential, of a follower of the Lord that stopped following. His story is complex and intriguing and challenging.

The Fall Of Israel

Week 8—July 27-August 2

David has a mixed life as king. His son Solomon follows him and builds the temple. But Solomon follows other gods and comes under judgment. Other (mostly evil) kings follow Solomon. The kingdom is divided. Jerusalem eventually falls and the people of Israel are taken into exile.

Memory Verse: 2 Kings 25:21b, 24

Judah went into captivity, away from her land... Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon and it will go well with you.

Readings:

36. David and Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 1:1-3:21

37. King Solomon: 1 Kings 2:1-3:28

38. Solomon's Temple: 1 Kings 8:1-9:9

39. Elijah/Baal Prophets: 1 Kings 16:29-19:18

40. Fall of Jerusalem: 2 Kings 25:1-30

The fall of Israel occurs over a couple of books of the Old Testament, but, in reality took place over several generations of people. The people went through a cycle that is common in history. They began by being close to God and gradually drifted away. The Bible tells us of the change in attitude of the leaders. We can also be assured that there was a change in the people as well. The major problem is that the changes take place at a slow pace and it is hard to get perspective when one is living only a short span of time.

The United States of America will one day be no more. This is true without any question, unless our Lord Jesus returns. The problem for us is the same as it was for the people of Israel. Where are we in the process? It is a gradual process of giving in to the constant bombardment of Satan and his forces. We can blame our leaders, or we can look at our own lives and evaluate them. In any case it is hard to get perspective as we live out our lives in our own day and time.

The Bible is clear that God is ultimately in charge and that we are to obey Him only. No matter what culture we live in or who is in charge on the earth, God is in charge of all and promises to be with us.

Spend some time this week reflecting on where you think we are as a country and how you personally have changed to accommodate the society in which you live instead of living a life fully for God.

Psalms and Proverbs

Week 9—August 3-9

The Psalms compose Israel's hymnal. They give expression to the feelings of believers in God, meditate on God's character and truth, and record human response to God in through various experiences.

Proverbs are meant to lead us to live spiritually ordered lives by imparting wisdom (skill for living) that covers a wide range of human experience. Right thinking and right acting are the goals.

Memory Verse: Proverbs 15:33

The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom,
and humility comes before honor.

Readings:

41. Lord is My Shepherd: Psalm 23:1-6

42. Have Mercy on Me: Psalm 51:1-19

43. Praise the Lord: Psalm 103:1-22

44. Godly Wisdom: Proverbs 1:1-4:27

45. Solomon's Proverbs: Proverbs 16:1-18:24

Psalm 23

¹The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. ³He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. ⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

A devotional from **Karla George**

In verse 4, “Comfort” can be defined as “To console, extend compassion, sigh with one who is grieving. Comfort does not describe casual sympathy, but rather deep empathy. It is weeping with those who weep or sighing with those who sigh.”

Until our Savior returns in glory, each of us will walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Whether it be the serious illness or death of a spouse, child, parent, relative, or friend, we will find ourselves in this valley. Our Heavenly Father promises in verse four that He will walk beside us through the shadows in life, and comfort and restore those who are full of loss and emptiness. He will give us strength to face each moment of each day. He assures us to not to fear as He will calm the turbulent waters. He will be our comforter. He will change the time of drought to a time of green pastures. He promises us that goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life. We will dwell in the house of our Lord...Forever!

To God Be The Glory!

Father, we thank you Lord for your promises of comfort. We thank you for those who walk with us through the valley of sorrow and offer comfort in Your Holy Name. We thank you for being the Good Shepherd and giving us the courage to face life's experiences. We thank you for loving us enough to face the cross to deliver us from the darkness of death. We thank you for the giving us the promise of dwelling in your house and sharing forever with you! Amen.

The Prophets

Week 10—August 10-16

Each of the prophets proclaim God's message of indictment, warning and consolation to the nations, especially the covenant nation of Israel and the Gentiles grafted into it. They are written throughout the span of Israel's history.

Memory Verse: Jeremiah 1:5

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

Readings:

46. The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 51:1-53:12

47. Jeremiah's Message: Jeremiah 1:1-3:5

48. Daniel in Lion's Den: Daniel 6:1-28

49. Story of Jonah: Jonah 1:1-4:11

50. Day of Judgment: Malachi 1:1-4:6

Contrast in Connectedness

The thought that kept repeating in my mind, while reviewing these passages, was the level of connection the people in them had with God. Players in the passages are the prophets, the Jews and the non-Jewish people. I was most profoundly struck by the prophets and the close relationship they had with God. They could hear God, clearly. God was using them directly. I admit I am envious of this connection.

So, I read a little closer and see that God called them specifically for that purpose. I believe we, too, are called with a purpose, yet, why is there so much less clarity for me? Why do I feel less connected, compared to the obvious connection of these prophets?

“Obedience” is what I’m hearing. If I want to be used by God, to hear Him clearly, to feel connected, I need to be obedient. I need to say “Yes” to God, no matter how large or small. Saying “Yes” to God is all.

The Living Word

Week 11—August 17-23

God uniquely breaks into human history as his son, Jesus, is born in human flesh. As a human, Jesus was tempted in every way we are, yet did not sin. In this section we hear of his birth, baptism and temptation before he formally begins his ministry. John's prologue (reading 51) includes many facets of the rest of Jesus' life.

Memory Verse: John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only,
who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Readings:

51. Word Became Flesh: John 1:1-18

52. Gabriel's Message: Luke 1:1-80

53. Birth of Jesus: Luke 2:1-40

54. John the Baptist: Luke 3:1-20

55. Baptism/Temptation: Matthew 3:13-4:17

For Jews and Greeks, the “word” was a common concept. Jews felt it expressed God’s wisdom. Greeks knew it to mean reason and intellect. For us, today, it is God’s gift to us in the body of Jesus, sent to bring us the “good news.”

Think about it. God in the flesh. In the flash of a moment, the Creator became the created. God the Son, the Holy of Holies, took form as a fetus in the womb. From the womb of a common woman, came a person with the same fears and emotions we all possess. God with ears that were a little too big, feet that were dirty and calloused, body odor, bad breath, an aching back. For a lifetime, Jesus was just like you and me! He faced daily temptations, worldly hunger, sleepless nights. We seem to think that is impossible. Even though Jesus was “man,” wasn’t He still perfect? Isn’t it easier to keep Him at arms’ length rather than to let Him in to “our group?” If He’s one of us, He’ll come to know all about us - won’t He? That’s too uncomfortable, too familiar, too irreverent.

For the sake of the world, God allowed His son to come to us to be one of us and to save each of us. It should be easier to believe that someone like us could like us (!); that it would be easier for one of our own to save us than for God to save us. If we are willing to let Jesus in, Jesus can get us out. If people want to see God, they can look at Jesus. If people want to see Jesus, can they look at us? After all, we’re made in the image of the Father and so was Jesus. Can people see Christ in you? Has your baptism into death and rising into new life brought God closer to you so that He’s “sticking out?” If we really believe that Jesus is the Word made flesh, it means we have a revelation of God that goes farther than anything we’ve ever known before and that the bridge (Jesus) has been built that closes the gap between man and God.

The Teaching Jesus

Week 12—August 24-30

The gospels tell us what Jesus did, what he taught as well as how people responded to him. This section focuses on the teaching of Jesus – as a rabbi, a storyteller and as one who proclaims the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Memory Verse: Matthew 6:33

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.

Readings:

56. Sermon on Mount #1: Matthew 5:1-6:4

57. Sermon on Mount #2: Matthew 6:5-7:29

58. Kingdom of Heaven: Matthew 13:1-13:58

59. Good Samaritan: Luke 10:25-37

60. Lost and Found: Luke 15:1-32

“The crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority” (Matthew 8:28-29).

As I read this week’s passages I was certainly impressed with the extensive content Jesus taught in just a few sermons. In the “Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus covered everything from the Beatitudes, adultery and divorce, murder, prayer, fasting, loving our enemies, giving to the needy, judging others, worry, trees and fruit and treasures in heaven. Even with such a wide array of topics, the passage that struck me the most was at the end of the sermon. “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matthew 7:28-29).

What was it about Jesus that led them to believe in His authority and how do we get that authority? Most all of us have had the opportunity to share the Gospel with someone. We may or may not have seized the opportunity. What can we do to share the Gospel with authority? Will the person on the receiving end listen to us because they believe we have authority when we speak?

The answer, I believe, is in the previous chapter. Jesus tells us to “seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). What Jesus did first was to seek His Father’s will and His righteousness. If we follow this command, then when we are in a situation that requires authority to share the Gospel so that we, too, will be heard, God will give us the authority through the Holy Spirit.

We are all going to have an opportunity in our new surroundings downtown to “speak with authority” and share the Gospel of Jesus. I pray that we can all follow the command of Jesus to “seek first the Kingdom of God” so that whatever we need to accomplish the task “will be given to [us] as well.”

The Miracles Of Jesus

Week 13—August 31-September 6

This week we look at how Jesus reveals himself through the miraculous things he did. Though we will only look at 5 events, there are many more miracles recorded in the gospels. Consider – Jesus tells us that we will do greater things than he did through the power of his Spirit.

Memory Verse: Matthew 11:25-26a

Jesus said to her, “ I am the resurrection and the life.
He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;
and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

Readings:

61. Feeding 5,000: Luke 9:1-36

62. Walking on Water: Matthew 14:22-36

63. Healing a Blind Man: John 9:1-41

64. Healing Demon Man: Mark 5:1-20

65. Raising Lazarus: John 11:1-57

A devotional from **Rosalie and Ella Millere**
(with Peggy Corbitt)

In response to the Bible stories of the miracles of Jesus, when asked "What do you think God wants us to learn from these stories?" Ella and Rosalie responded:

Ella: *Learning about Bible stories is good for us.*

Rosalie: *The stories of the miracles tell us that Jesus loves us.*

Ella: *When the disciples see Jesus walking on the water, at first they were scared (giggles); they thought He was a ghost.*

Rosalie: *Then they recognized Him, and it was Peter who tried to walk on the water with Him.*

Ella: *Then he sank because he didn't keep his eyes on Jesus.*

Rosalie: *Then Jesus pulled him out of the water.*

Ella: *And that is a lesson to always keep your eyes on Jesus. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and made Lazarus come out of the tomb, he did not even know Jesus was going to do that. Jesus waited 2 days before He went to raise him from the dead.*

Rosalie: *When Martha asked Jesus to come she was like, "Why didn't you come?" It is kind of like Jesus wants us to know what He can do.*

When asked what message these Bible stories have for the people of Trinity, **Rosalie** responds: *I think about when Jesus fed the 5000; I think He kept making more bread. Jesus can do things we don't even know He can do! That helps tell us that we should keep our eyes on Jesus because He is good to us.*

PRAYER (to be sung):

"Oh the Lord is good to me, and so I thank the Lord, for giving me the things I need - the sun and the rain and the apple seed. The Lord is good to me!" Amen.

In closing, **Rosalie** adds: *I think that when Jesus rose from the dead, it was a lesson to us that He can do what we ask sometimes - I think that He can do everything!*

The Cross Of Christ

Week 14—September 7-13

Not only does God assume human form in Jesus, he takes upon himself the penalty of our sins. He gives his life to enable us to have eternal life with him. In these passages we follow Jesus from the Last Supper through his death, resurrection and ascension.

Memory Verse: Hebrews 12:2a

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy set before him endured the cross.

Readings:

66. The Last Supper: Luke 22:1-46

67. Arrest and Trial: John 18:1-40

68. The Crucifixion: John 19:1-42

69. The Resurrection: John 20:1-25

70. The Ascension: Acts 1:1-11

A devotional from **Bishop John Guernsey**

Some time ago, the Church of the Holy Cross in New York City was broken into twice. First a metal moneybox next to a votive candle rack was stolen. Then, three weeks later, vandals got away with something far more valuable: a statue of Christ. The thieves unbolted the 4-foot long, 200-pound plaster Jesus from a chapel, but they left the wooden cross on the wall.

The custodian was amazed that someone would do that. He said, "They just decided, 'We're going to take Jesus and leave the cross.'"

That's a rather sad image of much of American Christianity, isn't it? Jesus, yes! Cross, no!

But you can't separate the real Jesus from the cross on which he died.

Jesus has forgiven us, he has saved us, he has reconciled us to God. What amazingly good news that is! That we, who feel so lost and broken and separated from God, are made new.

It is indeed good news and I think that many more people would accept it without hesitation if it were true as I just stated it. But I left out the crucial part.

It was because Jesus *died* that God has forgiven us.

It is by the *blood* of Jesus that we can be saved.

It is by his *sacrifice* of himself that Jesus reconciles us to God.

We cannot separate Jesus from His cross.

This week's memory verse emphasizes the pain which Jesus endured on the cross, taking upon himself our sin and its awful consequences that we might be forgiven and reconciled to God. It is a powerful truth which we must ever hold in our hearts and minds.

An article in the National Geographic told of a young man from Hanover, Pennsylvania, who was badly burned in a boiler explosion. To save his life, physicians covered him with 6,000 square centimeters of donor skin.

A journalist asked him, "Do you ever think about the donor who saved you?"

The young man replied, "To be alive because of a dead donor is too big, too much, so I don't think about it."

We are saved because of the sacrifice of Jesus. But God asks us not merely to think about it, but to focus on it, to dwell on it, to base our lives on the reality of Jesus' death on the cross for us. The Apostle Paul put it this way, "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Don't ever try to take Jesus and leave the cross.

The Church Is Born

Week 15—September 14-20

After Jesus returns to heaven, his disciples are to go to Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. With Pentecost comes the emergence of new leaders that help establish the church. Read about this exciting time in the life of the church as they are figuring out what their life in Christ, through the power of the Spirit means.

Memory Verse: Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Readings:

- 71. The Day of Pentecost: Acts 2:1-47

- 72. Growth/Persecution: Acts 3:1-4:37

- 73. First Martyr: Acts 6:8-8:8

- 74. Sharing the Word: Acts 8:26-40

- 75. Good News for All: Acts 10:1-11:18

A devotional from **Thomas McMillan**

The book of Acts is jam-packed with action, and this week's passages about the birth of the church are no different. On the day of Pentecost, the first day that the apostles really began to build the church, the Holy Spirit came with violence and rested on each of the apostles like tongues of fire. There was some confusion as the apostles began to speak to the crowds, and each person heard the apostles' message in his own language. The Holy Spirit worked through

the apostles and gave the apostles power to do God's work and spread the gospel. Even through the chaos, three thousand people became believers in Jesus Christ on that day alone because of God's power working through willing individuals. And so I think we should take a lesson from the apostles. What was it that allowed them to be the instruments of God's power? How can we become a church that performs God's will for the glory of God? And what will happen when we become the bold church of action through which the Holy Spirit works?

As a church which actively encounters God, we will be a bold church through which the Holy Spirit performs awesome works. That's not to say that everything will be easy. In fact, being bold is scary. Think of how the crowds felt when all of a sudden the apostles were speaking in multiple languages. Think of how the apostles felt when all of a sudden they could speak in multiple languages, and think of how the apostles felt when they were speaking up for what they believed at the risk of being persecuted and possibly killed. Think of Stephen who, when faced with death, continued to proclaim God's Word. They all must have been scared. But God gave them His Words to speak and His power to perform His will, and He will do the same for us. As a bold church we will grow together, and we will grow in number.

It is important to mention that the apostles acted and spoke the way they did because they encountered God. They were not using their own words, but they were using the words God gave them. The apostles were changed human beings. Simon Peter was a coward at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Through prayer we encounter God just as the apostles did. God always answers our prayers, and if we pray God's will, the Holy Spirit will move and perform great works. In chapter four, the believers came together and prayed that God would allow them to speak God's word with boldness and perform miracles through the name of Jesus, and after they prayed, "the place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly."

Therefore, pray, listen, and most importantly, have faith. Have faith in the Father to protect and comfort us. Have faith in the Son to save us. And have faith in the Holy Spirit to empower us. Though we are many parts in the Body of Christ, faith binds us together and gives us the power to build God's Church.

(For an expanded version of this reflection check the website.)

The Travels Of Paul

Week 16 –September 21-27

The story of the Apostle Paul begins before his conversion as he was helping to persecute believers. This week we'll read about how his ministry is shaped, about his determination to spread the news of the Kingdom to those who have not heard, and about the way he establishes churches all along the path of his journeys, often in spite of opposition and persecution.

Memory Verse: Romans 15:20

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.

Readings:

76. Road to Damascus: Acts 9:1-31

77. 1st Missionary Trip: Acts 13:1-14:28

78. Council at Jerusalem: Acts 15:1-41

79. More Journeys: Acts 16:1-20:38

80. Trip to Rome: Acts 25:1-28:31

Paul, an ordinary man with an extraordinary God, gives us the example of a life truly lived out in the power of the Spirit. Paul literally saw the light! He heard God's voice, "You are my chosen vessel..." (Acts 9:3). Paul traded a life of sin—bitterness, anger, violence, and fear—for a life completely given to God. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, he preached the Gospel boldly with passion and joy. From persecutor to persecuted--Paul was stoned, flogged, arrested, imprisoned, abused, and banished (Acts 13-28) all for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Gospel Paul preached.

Paul must have asked many times, "What kind of adventure is this?" (Fr. Jim, sermon 3/30/08). It was an adventure of faith and love that has continued and resounded to all parts of the world for 2000 years.

As we, Trinity Church, move forward in our adventure, I pray that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are led as Paul and the early Church planters were. I pray that we step out in faith with joy; and like Paul, we will let persecutions, opposition, and setbacks, strengthen us and give us courage to be faithful witnesses of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Paul To The Churches

Week 17—September 28-October 4

Paul writes letters back to the churches he has begun and visited. They are a combination of encouragement, correction and teaching. We'll sample some of his best known passages, but remember that each one comes in the context of a larger letter he was writing.

Memory Verse: Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Readings:

81. More than Conquerors: Romans 8:1-39

82. Fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:16-6:10

83. Armor of God: Ephesians 6:10-20

84. Rejoice in the Lord: Philippians 4:4-9

85. Supremacy of Christ: Colossians 1:1-23

Romans 8:1–39 More than Conquerors

In this passage, Paul is teaching about how life is when people have the Spirit of God living in them. Christians are not headed for doom and gloom from condemnation. We don't have to be afraid of defeat and bondage, weakness and doubt. We have been given freedom from these in Christ. God does allow human suffering, not to impair us, but to improve us; not to separate us, but to draw us closer to Him. The ultimate result of suffering is that God be glorified.

One of the suggestions for priming the pump for writing one of these devotionals was, "*Did anything in particular grab your attention as you read?*" Verses 37–39 definitely grabbed me. In these verses, Paul speaks with a dedicated heart and is so passionate and stirring as he dismisses anything that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ. He doesn't just feel that this is the truth. He is convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, or anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

As Christians, we cannot say that we are perfect and are immune to suffering. Through it we gain strength to be more than conquerors. When the spirit of God lives in us and we truly love Him, then he will be manifested in us in some way. It is our responsibility to share this true love with others.

Thank you, God, for your Holy Spirit that comes in many ways, particularly through your word, grabbing us and convincing us of your love through Christ. Thank you for your Holy Spirit as we face fear and things that try to separate us from you. Give us Paul's passion and dedication so that we, too, can teach others of your kind of love. Most of all, Lord, let your name be glorified in everything we do. Amen.

Paul To The Leaders

Week 18—October 5-11

All throughout Paul's life, he does not work alone. He is constantly raising up new leaders and training them to lead the churches. He has very specific instructions as to who should be a leader and how their lives should reflect the gospel message.

Memory Verse:2 Timothy 2:1-2

Grow strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus
and entrust what you have heard from me...
to other faithful people who will be able to teach others.

Readings:

86. Elders and Deacons: 1 Timothy 3:1-16

87. Love of Money: 1 Timothy 6:3-21

88. Good Soldiers of Christ: 2 Timothy 2:1-26

89. Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8

90. Coming of the Lord: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

Think about an organ donation. One shocked and grieving family agrees to share the gift of life with strangers. Another family, hoping and praying for a miraculous second chance, receives a long hoped for call and drops everything to accept this gift of life restored. Many who are skilled do their part, from the delivery people- careful to keep the organs properly cooled and protected, to the surgeons who ultimately stitch everything in place. There is no time to waste. All must work together so that through one death, many more receive a second shot at life.

Through Christ, one died that ALL might have life. The ultimate antidote! Life, not just temporal, but eternal. Healing, not just of flesh, but of emotions, memories, and dreams. The gospel is a gift to the whole world and we have it in unlimited supply to share with those around us. It is a sacred trust which we received from someone, but it is meant to be shared. Paul told Timothy to “grow strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus and entrust what you have heard from me...to other faithful people who will be able to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Faced with a loved one in medical crisis, we run with abandon to help in whatever way we can. What you have in Jesus is also meant to be shared. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19).

Apostles' Teaching

Week 19—October 12-18

Paul is not alone in providing leadership for the emerging church. Peter, James, and John write their letters as well and provide teaching necessary for maturing in life and godliness.

Memory Verse: 2 Peter 1:3

His divine power has given us everything we need
for life and godliness through our knowledge of him
who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Readings:

91. Most Excellent Way: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

92. A New Creation: 2 Corinthians 4:1-6:2

93. A Living Hope: 1 Peter 1:1-2:12

94. Faith and Works: James 1:1-2:26

95. Love One Another: 1 John 3:11-4:12

1 Peter 1:1-2:12 A Living Hope

Peter was addressing those new chosen Christians, helping them to understand their new faith in Christ, “to be filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” (1:8). Do we experience that joy in knowing Jesus Christ who has give us new birth through his dying and resurrection? Have we searched the scriptures (1:10) to see the prophecies of Christ’s coming and the meaning of our salvation? “Even the angels long to look on these things.” (1:12). We are a chosen people here at Trinity who come to the living stone (2:4) Jesus Christ, and live our lives so that others around us will see that Christ is our “living stone.”

In our adult lives we regard the Apostle Paul and his epistles as the theological beginning of the New Testament Church. Of course, these letters are filled with deep spiritual underpinning and are the bedrock of our understanding of how to live out the life of Jesus. Reading through the short letters of James, John and Peter, made us both aware that God had much to tell us about the practical living out of his message. John’s letters are filled with admonitions to love one another and certainly James reminds us of the importance to live out our faith in good works. Certainly Peter’s statement in 1 Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” is as beautiful and practical as Paul’s description of love in 1 Corinthians 13.

In our personal lives we can practically work out this living response to the Gospel by good works and in sharing with one another. As a young church we can imagine these letters as precious words of encouragement and admonition. As we prepare to move into our new environment we pray that God will move our hearts to respond in love and demonstrate that love in good works.

The Revelation

Week 20—October 20-26

John, in exile in Patmos, is given a series of visions about what is to come. This week we will read of the messages given to seven churches. Do any of these words fit TAC? We will then spend some time getting a glimpse of the throne room in heaven and the amazing worship there. There is great hope and triumph in being able to glimpse “the rest of the story” in these pages.

Memory Verse: Revelation 5:9-10

You are worthy... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.
You have made them to be a kingdom of priests to serve our God.

Readings:

96. A Voice and a Vision: Revelation 1:1-20

97. Messages to Churches: Revelation 2:1-3:22

98. Throne of Heaven: Revelation 4:1-7:17

99. Hallelujah: Revelation 19:1-20:15

100. The New Jerusalem: Revelation 21:1-22:21

A devotional from **Sue Ford**

As I read Christ’s message to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, I wondered what God’s message to Trinity would be if we were one of the churches receiving His message today. I hope that the word Christ used to describe two faithful churches,

Ephesus and Philadelphia, could also be used for Trinity: “perseverance.” Doesn’t that describe us? Much like these churches, we have had our faith tested, yet we have persevered, labored for Jesus, have not become weary, and have not denied our faith in Christ. And we aren’t done yet!

This passage also gives us some insight into the pitfalls some of the churches experienced. It’s like reading a letter with specific instructions from God on what to avoid. For me, it’s like watching my older brothers get in trouble for certain things growing up and deciding to stay far away from those things which angered my parents when I finally arrived at that age.

When Jesus admonishes the church in Ephesus, He addresses a very real problem which threatened to undo all the good they had accomplished for the Kingdom: somehow in the midst of all their great works for Christ, they lost the very ideal that their church was founded upon---their “first love”---their love for Christ---the very reason for all the good works in the first place! So, Jesus calls them to repent and to return to their first love. As a body, we can constantly pray for Trinity to never lose sight of our first love, the very reason we are united together.

However, in Jesus’ final words to the church at Philadelphia, He encourages them to “hold fast.” Those words leapt off the page at me as words of encouragement for Trinity! This says to me that God is with us no matter what. He has been and continues to be with us as we walk through the fire, the storm, and the trials; He has seen us persevere, and now His message to us is to “hold fast”---to our faith, our steadfastness, our desire to serve Him.

Like many of you, I love that we as a church are not looking for the easy way to live out our faith. Many of us would have chosen a different path if that were true. So, we have persevered in spite of the roadblocks and trials that have been set before us. We have grown together in our love for each other and in our love for the One who binds us together as a church.

As we begin a new chapter in our church life, I will remember Jesus’ words to hold fast to His truths, to rely on Him to lead us, to be our strength, with His promise that if we do, we will inherit the crown of life, a permanent place in God’s presence, our final reward.

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures
to be written for our learning:
grant us so to hear them,
read, mark, learn,
and inwardly digest them,
that we may embrace and
ever hold fast
to the blessed hope
of everlasting life,
which you have given us
in our Savior Jesus Christ;
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, p. 236
Collect for Proper 28