



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Understanding the New Testament

1, 2, & 3 John and Jude

⁵ *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. 1 John 1:5 NRSV*

¹⁸ *Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us. 1 John 2:18-19 NRSV*

²⁰ *Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹ The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. 1 John 4:20-21 NRSV*

⁷ *Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist! 2 John 7 NRSV*

¹¹ *Beloved, do not imitate what is evil but imitate what is good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. 3 John 11 NRSV*

²⁴ *Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, ²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. Jude 24-25 NRSV*

The Gospel of John and 1, 2 and 3 John were likely written by the same person or at least persons from the same community. As you will recall from the earlier discussions of the Gospels, the Gospel of John is quite different from the other Gospels. It seems to draw on different sources for its portrayal of Christ and has a greater emphasis upon the divine and human nature of Christ than do the synoptics, Matthew Mark and Luke. This emphasis is most evident in the very unique prologue to the Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has

*come into being*⁴ *in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.*⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it...*

¹⁴ *And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

John 1:1-5, 14. The Gospel of John emphasizes that Christ was always part of God and involved with the world and that God became flesh. Likewise 1 John opens with a declaration of Christ's existence from the beginning:

*We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—*² *this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—*³ *we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:1-3*

Both passages highlight what was likely the basis for a division in this early Church community: was Christ truly human and divine or was he only divine taking on the appearance of being human? The Gospel of John and the Johannine epistles declare that Christ was both human and divine.

The writer of the three Johannine epistles is concerned with divisions and false teachings in the Church. It appears that people have broken away from this community on the basis of their belief that God could never become flesh. It is these people that the writer refers to as “antichrists;” i.e. people who deny the humanity of Christ and are thus, in the eyes of the writer, opposed to Christ. The references to “antichrists” in these epistles are unique. The term does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. Contrary to the teachings of some Christian traditions, the bible does not describe a single “antichrist” to be born someday. (Next week in Revelation we'll deal with the conflation of scriptures that produces the teaching of the “Antichrist”) In the writer's mind, everyone who rejects Christ is an antichrist or has the “spirit” of the antichrist. See 2 John 7.

As part of this focus on unity, 1 John especially focuses on the importance of loving one another. Thus, in addition to the 1 John 4:20-21 quoted above, you have statements such as these:

⁹ *Whoever says, “I am in the light,” while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness.*¹⁰ *Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.*¹¹ *But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness. 1 John 2:9-11*

¹⁸ *Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 1 John 3:18*

⁷ *Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7*

¹⁶ *So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. 1 John 4:16*

There are more. Love for one another is a drum that John keeps pounding, likely because of the acrimony following the splitting of the community. Second and Third John are very short letters that also deal with acrimony within the community.

Jude is a very short letter that purports to be written by Jude, the brother of James and Jesus. Some scholars believe that its purported authorship was the reason for its inclusion in the canon. As supported in the writings of Paul and in the Book of Acts, James, the brother of Jesus, was one of the leaders of the early church in Jerusalem. However, it's unlikely that either James or Jude were schooled in Greek or sufficiently educated to have written this letter. This is almost certainly another example of a person seeking to enhance his message by claiming the name of a prominent early church leader.

It is difficult for me to find the Gospel in this letter. It is largely a warning against false teaching and a promise that those who oppose the "true" teaching of the author will receive the punishment of God. Its one contribution from my perspective is the benediction, quoted above, that has become a part of Christian liturgy.

Next week: The Revelation to John

The Poverty and Justice Bible

The Poverty & Justice Bible is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to www.Justicebible.org.

⁴ *The LORD is truthful;
he can be trusted.*

⁵ *He loves justice and fairness,
and he is kind to everyone
everywhere on earth. Ps 33:4-5 CEV*

The Bible does, in places, portray God as having the patience and nature of the most spiteful individual one can imagine. But there are also statements like this passage from Psalm 33. Rather than portraying God as hating a class of people, or a nation, the psalm declares God's love and concern for all of humankind. This theme is central to the Book of Jonah.

⁷ *Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you.* ⁸ *Everyone who asks will receive. Everyone who searches will find. And the door will be opened for everyone who knocks.* ⁹ *Would any of you give your hungry child a stone, if the child asked for some bread?* ¹⁰ *Would you give your child a snake if the child asked for a fish?* ¹¹ *As bad as you are, you still know how to give good gifts to your children. But your heavenly Father is even more ready to give good things to people who ask.*

¹² *Treat others as you want them to treat you. This is what the Law and the Prophets are all about.*
Matthew 7:7-12 CEV

The Gospel of Matthew is in accord. Jesus equates the love of God for everyone to an individual's love for their child. If even the worst parent is capable of acts of love toward their children how much more so is God?

Bible Study

For the last two years I have led a bible study on Thursday mornings. We are currently studying the Book of Psalms. There is room for as many as would like to participate. Please call me if you have questions or simply come and be a part of our study. We meet from 10:00 to 11:30 on Thursday mornings.

I believe that the study of scriptures with other Christians is an essential part of our journey as Disciples. If you would like to be a part of a bible study at another time, during the day or evening, please contact me. If we can interest four or five people in gathering at a particular time I would be glad to lead another study.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

January 19th : A Promise, A Question, An Invitation: My texts are 1 Corinthians 1:1–9 and John 1:29–42.

January 26th: Shredding the Church: There is a lot that can be done with a piece of paper, or even half a sheet, or a quarter-sheet. But at some point, if you keep tearing at it, the paper becomes confetti; possibly decorative but not very useful. In many ways, we have been tearing the Church apart for centuries. My texts are Matthew 4:12-23 and 1 Corinthians 1:10-18.

Worship Leaders Schedule

January 19

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Pat Moran & Linda Robinson, **Greeters**

Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Ushers**

January 26

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Sam Richardson & Marty Bauguess, **Greeters**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Ushers**

Announcements

Program Council will meet Wednesday, January 22 at 5:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall. The meeting will include planning for the lent and Easter season as well as planning special activities for 2014. Please plan to attend.

Updated Directory:

A **draft copy of the printed directory** will be made available for your review for the next two Sundays, January 19 and January 26. The draft will be located on the table inside the back door of the church. Please review your information for accuracy. Make any corrections to names, address, phone numbers, email addresses on the draft copy. After corrections are made, a final copy will be printed and will be made available to those who want a copy.

The **pictures for the directory** are nearly ready for your review. When the process is complete, you will receive directions to access the secure web address where the pictures are located. You will select the particular pose that you want to be printed in the directory and provide that information to Judy Richardson.

January Birthdays

Dawn Stevens, Aislinn Crowell, Cherry Klein, Dennis Meaker, Judy Richardson, Jessica Moore

Happy Birthday!