



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Understanding the Old Testament The Wilderness and a Nation in Chaos

¹⁶ Then the LORD raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them. ¹⁷ Yet they did not listen even to their judges; for they lusted after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their ancestors had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD; they did not follow their example. ¹⁸ Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD would be moved to pity by their groaning because of those who persecuted and oppressed them. ¹⁹ But whenever the judge died, they would relapse and behave worse than their ancestors, following other gods, worshiping them and bowing down to them. They would not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. Judges 2:16-19

Moses led a group of former slaves out of Egypt. But these people angered God and God resolved that they would not see the Promised Land. Instead they would spend forty years wandering in the wilderness of Sinai until a new generation had replaced the old; a new generation who would understand their relationship with God.

Some Christians look at a map and marvel that the people could wander 40 years in such a small area. Why couldn't they find the Promised Land for themselves? The answer is that they knew where the Promised Land was, but that God had determined that they would not enter the land. The wilderness period in the lives of the People of Israel was a time when they were totally dependent upon the grace of God. God fed them daily with manna, a substance that met their nutritional needs but that could not be stored. Each day they would receive their "daily bread," with an additional ration on the Sabbath so that they could eat on the Sabbath without doing the "work" of gathering food. And, as when the people left Egypt, they were led by the very presence of God; a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night:

³⁶ Whenever the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on each stage of their journey; ³⁷ but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel at each stage of their journey. Exodus 40:36-38.

Throughout the rest of the Old Testament you will find references to the Wilderness Journey. As you encounter these references, remember that the writer is referring to a period when the people were totally dependent upon God **and knew** they were totally dependent upon God.

The wilderness period ended when the people crossed the Jordan and began the conquest of the Promised Land. The manna also stopped on that day. From then on the people were dependent upon the land to provide for their needs. Although they were also still dependent upon God, who had brought them to this land, they forgot that they were dependent upon God. The Law tried to warn the people about the pitfall of forgetting about God:

*¹¹ Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. ¹² When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵ who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, ¹⁶ and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. ¹⁷ **Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth."** ¹⁸ **But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.** ¹⁹ If you do forget the LORD your God and follow other gods to serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. ²⁰ Like the nations that the LORD is destroying before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. Deuteronomy 8:11-20*

The People of Israel were able to subjugate part of the land, but the Canaanite people still occupied part of the land as well. The land was split up among the twelve tribes and the twelve tribes existed in a sort of uneasy Tribal Confederacy for the next two hundred years. There was periodic fighting between the Tribes of Israel and between the Tribes and the Canaanites and the Tribes and the peoples surrounding Canaan.

This period was dominated by a continuing problem summarized in the following verse:

⁷ The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, forgetting the LORD their God, and worshiping the Baals and the Asherahs. Judges 3:7.

Despite the discipline instilled in the Wilderness, the Israelites forgot what they had been taught about the nature of God. They began doing what was good in their own sight and worshiping the Gods the Canaanites worshiped. For two hundred years the people would follow the pattern described in the verses cited at the beginning of this article. They would follow the practices of the Canaanites, get themselves into trouble, and then God would act to save them through the leadership of one of the Judges. For a period the people would remain faithful, but then, usually after the death of the Judge, they would fall into their old ways until God once again appointed a Judge to lead them out of chaos.

If you have never taken the time to read through the Book of Judges, you should take a walk through its pages. Some of the richest, but most outrageous, stories in the bible are found in these pages. There is the story of Deborah who saved her people but shamed a great General. (The General suffers a gruesome death at the hands of a peasant women.) There is the story of Gideon, the least member, of the least family, of the least clan, of the least Tribe of Israel who, nevertheless, became one of Israel's greatest Generals. And there is the story of Samson, the rebellious fool who, nevertheless, brought down one of Israel's greatest enemies. But be warned, there are passages of Judges that are very graphic. One can only assume that the Book of Judges was not "banned in Boston" because no one from Boston took the time to read it.

The period of Judges ends when the people of Israel demand that a King be appointed over them.

Proposed Halloween Trunk or Treat Event at Trinity

From Jeanne Rybolt

For the uninitiated, think of Trunk or Treat as tailgating for Halloween. We'd have cars placed in the parking lot with their trunks decorated and the kids go from car trunk to car trunk to trick or treat. Beyond that, it could be as elaborate an event as we choose to have, possibly depending on which night of the week we choose to have it. Some options: contests (best costume, best decorated trunk, most original, etc.), hot dog supper inside, movie night, the ever-popular bounce house, games, entertainment, crafts, photo booth, etc.—whatever we feel we'd like to include in our event. You can find loads of ideas for trunk decorations on-line. I encourage the adults to come in costumes as well as the kids (a certain preacher and I would be dressing up as a couple of dwarves). Selfishly, I think it important to have family friendly decorations and costumes only – I get “spooked” very easily and will want to be able to sleep at night..... I'm proposing having the event on Saturday, October 29 beginning at 4 or 4:30 PM (the cars with decorated trunks would need to be in place earlier). This part needs to be decided as quickly as possible so we can get as many trunk decorators lined up as we can (it is not advisable to try this event without a **minimum** of 7 decorated trunks). Please e-mail me to let me know if you would be willing to participate and would be able to help with games and food.

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Preacher, What Does the Bible Say about ...?

From the time I came to Trinity I have stated on numerous occasions that I am willing to consider a sermon, or sermon series, on any subject that is of concern. I want to reaffirm that offer since it's been a while since I have stated it. If there is a subject upon which you would like me to preach I will consider it. If I do not think it appropriate for a sermon I will explain why. It might also be appropriate to address some issues as part of a Newsletter article or series or as part of the Sunday School curriculum. But, if at all possible, I will seek to speak to these issues that are of interest on Sunday morning. One purpose of worship is to contemplate our relationship with God and if something is bothering you it is likely bothering others as well.

New Disciple Bible Study

Disciple Bible Study is a powerful experience that can open the bible up for the participants. I would be willing to begin a new class this September if at least seven people desired to undertake the 34 week study. I could do this study on Monday or Tuesday nights between 7 and 9. If participants would prefer to meet on a week day that could also be arranged. In years past I have also taught Disciple Bible Study between 7 and 9 AM Sunday mornings. If you are interested please contact me at the Church. If you desire additional information for yourself or to give to a friend I have some explanatory booklets available.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

The Thursday Morning Bible Study Group will meet this week, September 1 at 10:00 AM. This week we will begin with Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons are part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Leslie Eastwood	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson

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

September 4: Sermon: My Work is Done. At the request of a parishioner, I have written a sermon discussing the ideas of Charles E. Hummel in his book, *Tyranny of the Urgent*. What we perceive as urgent can come to control our lives and lead us away from God. My texts are John 17:1-5 and Mark 1:35-39.

September 11: Sermon: Choosing to Reject Fear. It's the fifteenth anniversary of September 11, 2001. There is no doubt that this event shaped who we are today as a nation and, to some extent, will continue to shape us. But, we are a people who are also to be shaped by the Word of God. My texts are: John 14:18-27 and Luke 13:31-35.

Worship Leaders

September 4

Stacy Bell, **Liturgist**

Maurice and Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**

Dawn and Richard Stevens, **Ushers**

September 11

Ken Strait, **Liturgist**

Dorise and Bill LeCates, **Greeters**

Hal and Rachel Newman, **Ushers**

This **Saturday, September 3**, we have an opportunity to provide dinner and participate in the worship service at **61st UMC**. Volunteers are needed to serve food. Please make Charles Wilson aware of your willingness to serve. Charles telephone number: 615-347-4114 or cwilsonsr@wilsonpc.com

GraceWorks has a shortage on many items in our food pantry, and we need your help restocking it! Here is a list of some very critical items needed in our food pantry: **Critical Needs:** Canned green vegetables (not green beans), Canned beans, Canned meat (not tuna), Cereal, Hamburger Helper type boxed meals, Soup. Please support this important ministry with your regular donations. The box is located beside the side door.

Parents Night Out: Going forward, Parents Night Out will take place the first Friday of every month. However, the next event will be **September 9 which is the second Friday**. This is a one-time-only change from the first Friday. Please make your friends and neighbors aware of this opportunity.

Hosts and Hostesses for First Sunday Lunch: Please see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Please add your name to host this occasion for the coming months.

The Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School Class is both learning and enjoying a series of videos, narrated by Ray Vanderlann. The videos as well as the narration take place in ancient lands described in the Old Testament. We enjoy discussion about what we are learning and the application of the lessons to our lives. We enjoy fellowship beginning at 9:45 with our study beginning at 10:00. All are welcome to join us as we pursue Biblical truths and the application for our lives.

Birthdays in September

Elva Beard, Ava Aldred, JoAnn Harper, Jessica Bauguess, Wanda Folds, GL Jones, Gina Locke, Bill LeCates

Happy Birthday to each of you!