



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Understanding the Old Testament The Psalms and Proverbs

¹⁷ *How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!* ¹⁸ *I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you. Ps 139:17-18 NRSV*

¹ *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?* ² *O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Ps 22:1-2 NRSV*

⁶ *Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD! Ps 150:6 NRSV*

The Book of Psalms is one of the Bible's spiritual treasures. In its pages you will find prayers to express every feeling that you ever experienced. When the People of Israel prayed it was from the heart; from the deepest depths of their souls. They did not hold back their joy, their fear, their anger, their despair or their sorrow. They took everything to God in prayer.

Once, while leading a Disciple Bible Study class, I told the class that it was okay to offer an angry prayer to God. One woman was shocked. "You can't offer an angry prayer! That's disrespectful! After all, Paul says to give thanks for everything in your life!" 1 Thess 5:18. "God might punish you if you're angry with him." I thought about that for a moment and then asked her if she really believed that God didn't know how she felt, even if she wasn't speaking words in anger. The people of Israel proceeded from the standpoint that God always knew what was in their hearts so there was no reason to try and disguise their feelings.

How do you speak of the profound sense that, wherever you go, God is always with you? Look to Psalm 139. Have you ever been overwhelmed by the immensity of creation and wonder how God could care about you? Look to Psalm 8. Ever **felt** like your body was being ripped apart and everyone around you was against you? Read psalm 22. How about a feeling that God is always with you, leading you through the hard times? Reflect on Psalm 23.

The psalms of the People of Israel are about our day to day interaction with God and our feelings about God. Some will shock you because of their brutality. Others will make you laugh because of the things about yourself they bring to your mind; your experience of life. If you have never taken the time to read all the

psalms, set aside a brief time every day for a couple of months to read and reflect on the psalms. There are only 150 of them. I suspect that you will find your own prayer life enriched by the genuine emotions evoked by the psalms.

The Book of Proverbs is part of the Wisdom literature of the bible. Wisdom, as the term is used in scripture, is the ability to discern the difference between good and evil in all that we do. Wisdom focuses on how we relate to one another. It's relational. It's about how we get along with one another. And, according to scripture, Wisdom is part of God's creation and is **characterized as a female**:

¹⁹ *The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;*
 by understanding he established the heavens;
²⁰ *by his knowledge the deeps broke open,*
and the clouds drop down the dew. Proverbs 3:19-20 NRSV

As portrayed in the Book of proverbs, Wisdom, that knowledge of right and wrong, is a woman:

⁸ *Does not wisdom call,*
and does not understanding raise her voice?
² *On the heights, beside the way,*
 at the crossroads she takes her stand;
³ *beside the gates in front of the town,*
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
⁴ *“To you, O people, I call,*
 and my cry is to all that live.
⁵ *O simple ones, learn prudence;*
 acquire intelligence, you who lack it.
⁶ *Hear, for I will speak noble things,*
and from my lips will come what is right;
⁷ *for my mouth will utter truth;*
wickedness is an abomination to my lips. Proverbs 8:1-7

Wisdom is a woman. Many of the proverbs are not very favorable to women but there is no basis for challenging that Wisdom is portrayed as a woman in scripture.

The Book of proverbs provides a lot of advice, and some of that advice is pretty practical aimed at getting along in the world. For instance, consider this one:

Proverbs 26:17

¹⁷ *Like somebody who takes a passing dog by the ears*
is one who meddles in the quarrel of another.

Ever been there? Two people are quarreling and you decide to step in, either to take sides or try to resolve the quarrel. How did that work out for you? A lot of the time it does not work out well.

How about 26:18-19:

¹⁸ *Like a maniac who shoots deadly firebrands and arrows,*
¹⁹ *so is one who deceives a neighbor*

and says, "I am only joking!"

Watch out for those practical jokes on the neighbor. They may well come back to haunt you. What you think is a real thigh slapper may not be funny to your neighbor.

I especially like this one: Proverbs 27:14

¹⁴ *Whoever blesses a neighbor with a loud voice,
rising early in the morning,
will be counted as cursing.*

You may be a **morning** person. You may like to get up early. You may think that it's a good thing to get up early. But when you do, keep it down. Even if you are shouting a blessing, your neighbor may hear it as cursing.

Then there is Proverbs 25:17:

¹⁷ *Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house,
otherwise the neighbor will become weary of you and hate you.*

Even four thousand years ago, people liked their privacy. A few neighborly visits are okay, but be careful over doing it.

For those who like to bargain there is proverbs 20:14:

¹⁴ *"Bad, bad," says the buyer,
then goes away and boasts.*

And then there are those proverbs that deal with wealth and poverty. While laziness is condemned, the proverbs do not assume that all the poor are lazy: Proverbs 13:23

²³ *The field of the poor may yield much food,
but it is swept away through injustice.*

The poor may have the means of taking care of themselves, but their poverty makes them vulnerable to the rich who would cheat them of what they have. Proverbs also emphasizes that God does not look with kindness on those who cheat the poor or who will not give to help the poor: 14:31

³¹ *Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker,
but those who are kind to the needy honor him.*

22:2

² *The rich and the poor have this in common:
the Lord is the maker of them all.*

We are all made by God. If you oppress the poor you insult God and if you are kind to the poor you honor God. 19:17

Central to the biblical story and the law of Israel is that God hears the cries of the poor and oppressed. This proverb reminds us that it is wrong to pretend we do not see or hear the poor around us. Jesus said what we do for the least person around us we do for Him. Proverbs 31:8-9

⁸ *Speak out for those who cannot speak,
 for the rights of all the destitute.*
⁹ *Speak out, judge righteously,
 defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

We are not only to give to help those less fortunate, but to speak out for them as well.

There are many more proverbs. I encourage you to take the time to look through them. The thought I will leave you with is this: The bible calls us to live our faith. The Book of Psalms and the Book of Proverbs emphasize that our faith is centered not only on God but on how God would have us live. As a text from James points out, what good is our faith if we will not give it life through our actions? James 2:14-26.

“God Has So Strangely Made Them Free”

The Fourth of July is a good time to consider this bit of Methodist and American history. Prior to 1784 all Methodist Pastors were either Lay Preachers or Priests (Presbyters) ordained by the Bishops of the Church of England. Wesley had been asked to ordain pastors for the Methodists in America but had refused because he viewed it as contrary to the rules and order of the Church of England. Only Bishop's ordained. However in 1784, prior to the writing and ratification of the Constitution, Wesley took steps to establish the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. The Methodist Episcopal Church was not to be a part of the Church of England. The use of the term “Episcopal” is derived from the Greek word *episkopos* meaning Bishop and simply indicated that the Methodist Church would be governed by Bishops. Wesley consecrated Thomas Coke as Bishop for the Methodist Episcopal Church, an act that was considered very controversial. His brother Charles condemned this act but Wesley believed that the right to consecrate a Bishop for the new Church was inherent with the authority granted to him in his own ordination.

Upon his arrival in America, Thomas Coke consecrated Frances Asbury as Bishop in accordance with Wesley's directions. Asbury had been acting as Superintendent of the Methodists in America throughout the years of the revolution. However, Asbury refused to accept supervision over the Church until the Conference of Methodist Pastors had approved his role as Bishop and had adopted Wesley's plan for the church in America. It was Asbury who was to become the principle guiding force for the Methodist Episcopal Church until his death in 1816.

Letter to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and Our Brethren in North America
Bristol, September 10, 1784.

1. By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from their mother-country, and erected into independent States. The English Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the States of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the provincial Assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice; and in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch.

2. Lord King's "Account of the Primitive Church" convinced me many years ago, that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our Travelling Preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church to which I belonged.

3. But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are Bishops who have a legal jurisdiction: In America there are none, neither any parish Ministers. So that for some hundred miles together, there is none, either to baptize, or to administer the Lord's supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

4. I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint Superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as Elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's supper. And I have prepared a Liturgy, little differing from that of the Church of England, (I think, the best constituted national Church in the world,) which I advise all the Travelling Preachers to use on the Lord's day, in all the congregations, reading the Litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the Elders to administer the supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

5. If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present, I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

6. It has, indeed, been proposed to desire the English Bishops to ordain part of our Preachers for America. But to this I object, (1.) I desired the Bishop of London to ordain only one; but could not prevail. (2.) If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. (3.) If they would ordain them now, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! (4.) As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State, and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith **God has so strangely made them free.** [Wesley had opposed the Revolution but acknowledged the hand of God in the outcome of the Revolution.]

JOHN WESLEY.¹

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

¹ Wesley, J. (1872). *The Works of John Wesley* (Third Edition, Vol. 13, pp. 251–252). London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room.

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 has voted to take a break for the summer. We will begin again on August 25th at 10:00 AM. At that time we will start a study of Philippians.

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

July 10th: Sermon: View From the Ditch. When someone tells a story we want to be able to identify with the ‘good guy,’ the hero. That is human nature and was true in Jesus’ day. But, when Jesus tells the story of the Samaritan, the crowd is at a loss. How can they be expected to identify with their worst enemy? My texts are Colossians 1:1–14 and Luke 10:25–37.

July 17th: Sermon: Famine of God's Word. We’d be upset if we had no food to eat, water to drink, a home to live in and the good things in life to enjoy. Would we be as upset if we could have everything else we wanted but had to go without the Word of God? My texts are Luke 10:38–42 and Amos 8:1–12.

July 10

Houston Hartsock, Liturgist
Donnie and Renita Hartsock, Greeters
Hal and Rachel Newman, Ushers

July 17

Mike Fetting, Liturgist
Ken and Jan Strait, Greeters
Maurice and Joyce Edwards, Ushers

The men’s group is planning to attend an evening Sound’s game Friday, July 22. The start time for the game is 7:05. Wives and family members are included in the invitation. Please make Marty Bauguess aware if you are planning to attend. He will need to know by Sunday, July 16.

Parents Night Out: The dates for this event in July are: July 15 and July 29. Lindsay Stafford and Jan Strait have done a wonderful job in providing leadership and organization for this event. Please make your friends and neighbors aware of this opportunity for children ages 4-12. Please pray for the children and the volunteers who will be participating.

VBS

Interested volunteers are meeting weekly (Thursday evenings) for planning this year’s event. You are welcome to attend this 6:30 PM meeting if you would like to be a part of this opportunity

The enrollment form is online on our website, www.trinityfranklinUMC.org. Please utilize this form and share this address with neighbors and friends.

If you have questions, please contact Dawn Stevens at (615)-638-8827 or dawnstevens1961@gmail.com. VBS is an exciting, fun time for all, come join in! VBS dates: July 18 – 21 from 6:30 – 8:00 PM.

Erin McKibben is hosting a weekly devotional meeting at her home, “Meditations on Tuesdays.” This weekly meeting will take place each week through July. Time of meetings is 7:00 – 8:30 AM. Her address: 8358 Carriage Hills Drive which is off of Wilson Pike across from Ravenwood High School.

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 July

Leslie Eastwood, Jeff Otto, Linda Robinson, Renita Hartsock

Happy Birthday to each of you!