



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Understanding the New Testament

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. Matthew 1:18 NRSV

Last week I concluded the series of articles on understanding the Old Testament. These articles were not as detailed as a biblical commentary. I meant them as a roadmap that could be used to help interested people study the Old Testament without becoming lost in the history of Israel.

This week I am turning to the New Testament. Again, my purpose will not be to provide a biblical commentary but rather a roadmap of sorts to help you read and study these scriptures that are central to our faith.

The Gospels: The Gospel of Matthew

The word “gospel” is the translation of a Greek word meaning “good news.” The Gospels then are a proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ. They should not be read as biography or as news accounts of events, although those elements do arise from time to time. Their overriding purpose is to proclaim the incarnation of God through Jesus Christ and relate his life, teaching, death and resurrection. Moreover, each of the four Gospels were written to different communities of Christians with differing concerns, and all the Gospels were written between thirty-five and sixty years after the crucifixion. Although there is a great deal of similarity between the four Gospels, there are also differences regarding some events and differences in emphasis.

The Gospel of Matthew is generally believed to have been written between 80 to 85 C.E. Christ was probably crucified between 30 and 35 C.E. Although the Gospel is attributed to the Apostle Matthew, the manuscripts that exist for this Gospel do not identify the author. There are several reasons to doubt that the Disciple Matthew is the author of the Gospel. First, the authorship of the Gospel does not appear on any of the early manuscripts of the Gospel. The title was added sometime in the second century. Although the Gospel of Matthew describes the Disciple Matthew, nowhere does it claim that the writer is the Disciple Matthew. The Disciple Matthew is described as a man “sitting at a tax booth.” Tradition holds that Matthew was a tax

collector, a position that would normally be held by an older man probably in his late 20s at least. The Gospel was written around fifty years after the death of Jesus. While people would certainly have lived into their seventies and eighties in the First Century, the expected life span was much less. Finally, as will be discussed in the next article, much of the Gospel of Matthew is believed to be drawn from the Gospel of Mark. There would seem to be little reason for someone who knew Jesus to base his Gospel upon the writings of another.

It is not possible to identify the community to which this Gospel was written, but it is presumed to have been a community with a large number of Jews. The Gospel goes to great pains to identify Jesus as the Davidic Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. This emphasis is established at the very beginning of the Gospel:

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matthew 1:1 NRSV

The Gospel of Matthew then proceeds to place Jesus within Jewish history by providing a genealogy that begins with Abraham and ends with Joseph. The genealogy purports to outline Jewish history by placing fourteen generations between Abraham and King David, fourteen generations between King David and the exile to Babylon and then fourteen generations between the exile and Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. For Matthew, Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise of a Davidic Messiah; a new King of Israel. Matthew also describes Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jewish law and the prophets.

The writer of Matthew also seeks to strengthen the connection between Jesus and the Law by emphasizing parallels between Jesus and Moses. Moses was born to be the deliverer of his people from slavery. The Pharaoh of Egypt had ordered the murder of all male Jewish children. Moses was born in Egypt and escaped murder as an infant when his Mother placed him in a basket in the Nile River. He later escaped Egypt and fled to Palestine. Jesus was born in Bethlehem and was proclaimed to be the savior of his people. King Herod ordered the murder of all male children born in Bethlehem. Jesus escaped murder as an infant when Joseph and Mary took him to Egypt and then returned him to Palestine following Herod's death. Moses took the people into the wilderness and experienced a time of testing. He then went to the Mountain of God and received the Law. Jesus, after being baptized by John, goes into the wilderness for a time of testing and then proclaims the law in the Sermon on the Mount. All of these references would resonate with First Century Jews.

Some Christians seem to believe that Jesus reinterpreted the Law of Moses. However, if you read the Books of the Prophets of the Old Testament you will find that what Jesus says in Matthew fits comfortably within the teachings of the prophets. The prophets, like Jesus, reject interpretations of the law that push people aside or which exalt forms of worship over substance. Finally, there are numerous references in Matthew to the effect that Jesus repeatedly "fulfills" scriptures of the Old Testament. For all these reasons it seems likely that the community for which Matthew was written was likely a community that observed the law and contained many Jews.

Many of the teachings and parables found in Matthew are also found in Mark and Luke, and the reasons for this will be discussed in the next article. One passage that is unique to Matthew is the Judgment of the Nations. Matthew 25:31-46. It is here that Christ teaches that what we do "for the least" is something that we do for Christ.

The Gospel of Matthew is significant in another regard as well. It is the only Gospel to use the term "Church" (Matthew 16:18, 18:15, 17 and 21). It is unlikely that Jesus referred to his disciples as a "Church." That term is used extensively in the Epistles and the Book of Acts. However its use in Matthew is consistent with another passage of Matthew, the Great Commission:

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20 NRSV.

Charge Conference

In “Methodist-speak” a *Charge* is one or more churches who share pastoral leadership. My first appointment in 1998 was to a four point charge; a charge made up of four churches. Trinity UMC is a single church charge. Every Charge has an annual Charge Conference. At the Charge Conference the members of the Church celebrate the ministries of the charge, elect officers, set the pastor’s salary, recommend candidates for pastoral ministry and lay service and confer with the District Superintendent.

As was done last year, this year’s Charge Conference will take place at Epworth UMC. Charge conferences for most of the Churches in the East Williamson County area will take place at that time. We will gather for worship from 4:00 to 4:30. Our Charge conference will take place at 5:00. All members of the Church are welcome to attend.

Children’s Church/Nursery

Sunday School and Nursery care is available every Sunday during the Sunday school hour. Children from birth through the 6th grade are welcome. Children’s Church and Nursery care are available for Children from birth through pre-k after the Children’s Time in worship. We encourage parents to keep their children of Kindergarten age and up in the sanctuary during worship. It’s important that our children experience the worship of the Church community from an early age.

Lesson plans are currently available that volunteers can use to lead Children’s Church during worship. These lesson plans (almost 100 separate plans) do not require any preparation or pre-planning. Each lesson includes a short Bible Story to be read to the children as well as a corresponding craft project. All supplies for the crafts are on hand in the Nursery.

We need two volunteers each Sunday to provide Children’s Church during worship. With enough volunteers it shouldn’t be necessary for any adult to miss worship more than one Sunday every two months. If you would be willing to volunteer to help with the Children’s Church ministry please see Jeanne Rybolt, Julia Moore, Dawn Stevens or Dana Bauguess to learn more.

Halloween Trunk or Treat Event at Trinity

From Jeanne Rybolt

For the uninitiated, think of Trunk or Treat as tailgating for Halloween. We’ll 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. We’ll also have hot chocolate available for the kids. The event will be from 6 to 8:00 PM. There is still time to bring a trunk load of goodies for the event.

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. 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.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

The Thursday Morning Bible Study Group meets weekly on Thursdays from 10:00 to 11:30 AM. We are currently studying Romans.

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

October 23rd: Sermon: It's All Up to Me. One of the hardest aspects of our faith life is acknowledging our relationship to God. My texts are 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18 and Luke 18:9–14.

October 30th: Sermon: How Goes It With Your Soul? This was the traditional question for all participants in a Methodist Class meeting. Accepting Christ was just the beginning. How has your faith affected your life? My texts are Psalm 119:137–144 and Luke 19:1–10.

Worship Leaders

October 23rd

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Linda Robinson and _____, **Greeters**

Mike and Renee Fetting, **Ushers**

October 30th

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Gina Locke and Brandon Stewart, **Greeters**

Greg and Sherry Locke, **Ushers**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

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 October

Elaine Rohrig, David Stafford, Julia Moore, Jan Strait, Reba Collier

Happy Birthday to each of you!