



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*

At the beginning of the year I wrote a series of articles on understanding the Old Testament. If you are interested in reviewing those, I have posted them on the Web Site [here](#). These articles were not anywhere 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.

For the rest of this year I am going to be examining 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 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 next week, 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.*

(Next week: the Gospel of Mark and the Synoptics)

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, 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.

¹⁴ *You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns.* ¹⁵ *You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt. Deuteronomy 24:14-15*

Withholding wages of the poor has a long history as indicated by this law that dates back over 3000 years. The poor are easy to exploit. They are desperate for the work they and their families need to survive and therefore wholly dependent upon the good will of the employer. Scripture makes it clear that God cares about the relationship between employer and employee, especially when the employee is poor and unable to bargain. These laws found their way into civil law in England and America as employers tried to tie poor workers down with company stores and housing and payment in company script.

Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. ² *Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten.* ³ *Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days.* ⁴ *Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.* ⁵ *You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.* ⁶ *You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you. James 5:1-6.*

The writer of James is condemning the rich who exploit the poor. Again the theme is that God cares about what we do to acquire our wealth. God cares about who we hurt to acquire our wealth. Capitalism says that labor is merely a commodity and that it is right and good to obtain that commodity at the lowest rate possible. These scriptures at least challenge us to consider whether we are straying in our discipleship when we sanction the use of labor purchased for a pittance from the poorest people in the world. I submit that they also challenge us to consider whether we, as Christians, should care about employees receiving a living wage.

Mid-Year Budget Report

From Rodger Klein, Chairperson of Finance

As we reach the middle of the year and enter the third quarter, it is an appropriate time for us to take a look at our church budget and how we are doing with regard to our finances. Trinity UMC is very blessed financially and we are fortunate to be in a position where we have no debt and significant cash reserves. As always we give thanks to God for generously blessing our church with these financial resources.

Looking at our giving, however, we have not achieved our budget for giving this year and unless things change, we are facing a significant budget deficit as we approach our fiscal year end (12/31/13). We are controlling our expenses, but our collections from week-to-week have fallen short of our expectations. This is not new for us at Trinity, but I wanted our congregation to be aware of our situation so that we can try to address this problem as we move forward toward the end of the year. Currently, our Sunday collections are on a trend that will leave us approximately \$21,000 short of our budget for this line item, or about 15.8%.

I wanted to make everyone aware of this fact and ask each of our members to review their personal giving patterns so that we can try to make up this shortfall over the remaining months of the year. In the past, Trinity has not used a system of pledges in order to manage our financial needs, but we have communicated with our members when we needed to ask for some additional giving in order to balance our budget. Last year, we were in a similar situation as we approached the end of the year, but year-end giving and a few special gifts helped us to finish 2012 with a balanced budget.

Again, please consider your personal giving to our church and help us if you can.

Graceworks' Ministries

Graceworks has on-going needs in their ministries to the community. In particular, at the present time, the following items are in short supply:

Toilet Paper	Shampoo/Conditioner
Razors	Shaving Cream
Dishwashing Liquid	Cleaning Supplies
Laundry Detergent	Soap
Toothpaste	Toothbrushes

If you are able to contribute any of these items, please bring them by the Church and we will deliver them to Graceworks. Thanks for your support of this ministry.

Still Looking for Worship Leaders

The Worship Ministry is central to any church because it involves the majority of the members every week. Central to the Worship Ministry is the leadership of the laity. Judy Richardson and I are trying to organize the worship leadership schedule so that it is easier for people to plan in advance when they will be serving as **Greeters, Liturgists, Ushers and Counters**.

I would very much like to see greater participation in worship leadership from the laity. If you would like to make worship leadership part of your ministry in the church, please contact either Judy Richardson or Rev. Meaker.

The Problem of Personal Information

At one time it was not unusual to distribute lists of birthdays and other personal information within the Church. Such lists can still be created today if people wish to add their names to them. However, despite many requests to the contrary, I have chosen not to put information about birth dates, other than birth month, or other personal information, in the newsletter. Once this information has been posted in an online newsletter it is available to everyone. Our birth dates are an important piece of personal information that can be used as part of an effort to steal someone's identity. For much the same reason we do not post addresses and telephone numbers of members and we do not publish information about who is in the hospital. If a thief knew that someone was in the hospital they might take the opportunity to target that person's home for a break-in. The potential misuse of online information is something that we all need to be careful about.

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

August 18th Sermon: I Have Come to Start a Fire. Being a Christian is all about harmony, isn't it? My texts are Isaiah 5:1-7 and Luke 12:49-56.

August 25th Sermon: God's Call. Who does God call to minister to the world? Is God calling you? My texts are Psalm 71:1-6 and Jeremiah 1:4-10.

Worship Leaders Schedule

August 18

Rodger Klein, **Liturgist**

Jeanne Rybolt & Linda Robinson, **Ushers**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

August 25

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Ushers**

Charles & Cheryl Wilson, **Greeters**

Announcements



You are invited to "**Old School Sunday School**" at **9:45** in the Fellowship Hall. We are singing, praying, studying scripture and caring for one another as we strive to become new people in Christ. Our curriculum is Cokesbury's Adult Bible Studies and our template is Colossians 3:12-17. **Join us Sunday for "Old School Sunday School"!**

"Companions in Christ" gathers at 9:45. We are talking about how to be better companions to our fellow Christians, discover what our spiritual gifts are, and dig deeper into what we believe and why. Please come and enjoy this time with your church family and deepen your spiritual connection with God. We will meet in the Youth Sunday School room. All are welcome!

Ministry with 61st Ave. UMC. We will be providing food and worshipping at 61st UMC **Saturday, August 17th**. The remaining date to serve and worship this year is **November 16**.

ATTENTION Finance Committee Members:

The following are future Finance Committee meeting dates:

September 14, 2013 – 2014 Budget Review and Approval

October 19, 2013 – Review 3rd Quarter Financial Results

January 18, 2014 – Review 4th Quarter & 2013 Financial Results

Choir Rehearsal: There will not be any rehearsals during the month of August.

Men's Group: The Men's group will be providing music during the service **Sunday, August 18**. They are looking forward to a **golf outing September 23** and will be hosting the **Pancake Breakfast October 12**.

August Birthdays

Mike Rohrig, Sarah Jordan, Larry Kirk, Charles Wilson, Dana Bauguess.

Happy Birthday to each of you!