

"WALK THRU THE NEW TESTAMENT."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: Luke 4:14-22; Galatians 4:4-5

Introduction.

Imagine yourself in the first century, you are a faithful Jew, around 30 AD, living in Palestine in Nazareth. You were raised on the OT, you know the prophecies, you know the covenants with Moses and David. You grew up hearing your parents and relatives talk late into the evening about how someday a Messiah would come. For 400 years your people waited with expectation. 400 years since the last great prophet had spoken.

Malachi's final words burned in everyone's ears, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes" (Malachi 4:5).

400 years is a long time to wait. The children of Israel languished for 400 years of slavery in Egypt before God raised up a deliverer, a savior, a Messiah of sorts in the person of Moses.

For the Jews in Palestine the past 100 years of waiting were the hardest, 100 years under Roman rule and the thumb of distant Caesars. "How long, O Lord" was the common prayer. "How long, O Lord."

Now imagine you are a faithful Jew in your synagogue on the Sabbath and a young man of about 30 walks in. You recognize him, He grew up in Nazareth. He has developed something of a reputation throughout the countryside as a teacher and preacher. He was well spoken of. Sort of a local boy makes good story.

He stood up, took the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and deliberately unrolls it to the very familiar words of Isaiah 61. You know this passage by heart, how many times have you heard this promise of a coming messianic king who would come to proclaim good news, and freedom for the captives and liberty for the oppressed.

Here is this man reading these words but it isn't the same, something is different, everyone's attention is riveted on the speaker.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

He hands the scroll back to the attendant, sits down and says, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Today this 700 year old prophecy spoken by the great prophet Isaiah is declared fulfilled, and you heard it. But isn't this the carpenter's son?

Didn't He build Uncle Azariah's kitchen table, didn't He make Aunt Elizabeth's chest of drawers. Isn't this Joseph's son? And the answer is no. He is no longer just Joseph's son. As the voice from heaven declared at His baptism, this is God's beloved Son, and as He reads the prophecy about the Messiah, He announces He is the Messiah! He is the Son of Abraham, the royal Son of David, the Savior of the world.

In one sentence, your concept of the entire Old Testament is blown apart. In one sentence the New Testament has been inaugurated. What are you thinking in that moment? There is no neutral response to this moment; Jesus proclaims the 400 years of silence is over, the thousands of years of waiting is over. This is the dawning of a whole new age of history, of a new kingdom.

As Jesus was speaking the very words were coming true. At a particular time, in a particular place, through a particular life God decisively, purposefully acted to accomplish and bring to fulfillment what He had planned to do from eternity past.

Jesus entered into redemptive history, no more prophecies, no more promises, no more hints, now the only thing missing, fulfillment.

Galatians 4:4-5 When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Genres, types of literature.

In May of 2024 we started on this journey through the 66 books of the Bible. Tonight we begin our walk through the 27 books of the NT. Lord willing, we will finish by advent. That's my goal. Tonight is an introduction, first a brief look at the whole Bible and beginning look at the NT.

You might remember my analogy of likening the 66 books of the Bible to Route 66. Arguably the most famous highway in America, Route 66 runs from LA to Chicago. It is called the Mother Road,

It's 2400 miles from LA to Chicago, 2400 miles. In percentage of books we have finished 60%, 39 in OT, 27 in NT, in miles on Route 66 that would put us around Oklahoma City. We will make it to Chicago by Advent.

Route 66 passes through eight states, and there are eight genres or kinds of literature in the Bible.

Each of these states are the different genres of literature in the Bible. Each genre has its own style and substance which reveals something unique about the person and character of God and we need them all to see all that God is revealing about Himself.

In the OT there are the five books of Moses, the Pentateuch, the 12 histories or historical narratives, the five books of Wisdom, or poetic literature, and the 17 Prophets, major and minor.

The New Testament revelation contains the recorded words of Jesus Christ and of His followers. There are twenty-seven different writings by nine different authors. The writing happened between A.D. 45 and A.D. 100. The NT can be classified by four more genres, or kinds of literature.

In the NT we will pass through the four states/genres of four Gospels, one history, 21 letters (Pauline and General) and Revelation.

The Gospels are historical in character, but they are more than histories or biographies, they are historical testimonies. They are actually considered unique in all the history of literature, there has been nothing like them before or since. They narrate the story of the life and work of Jesus from four different perspectives. Acts continues the story of the early history of the followers of Jesus, with special emphasis on the missionary work of Paul.

Following Acts there are 21 letters, 13 by Paul (arranged longest to shortest) and 8 that are called general epistles. Most were written to churches to instruct them in faith and practice. Six letters are personal (I and II Tim., Titus, Philemon, II and III John) written as counsel to individuals, usually in leadership, rather than to groups.

Revelation is Prophetic and deals with the future as well as the present. Interestingly it is written as a letter addressed to seven churches.

The Bible is not a single book but a Library. And what a library it is! It is a library of 66 God-revealing, God-breathed books. This is the Word of God.

Authorship

I usually begin each week's Scripture reading with a sentence that includes words like, "This is the true and eternal, trustworthy, infallible word of the living God." In other words, it doesn't really matter who the human author is or what we know about him or even what his character was like.

Moses was a murderer and so was David along with being an adulterer. Solomon was a polygamist whose wives led him astray. Jonah tried to run away. Hosea married a prostitute. Matthew was an embezzler. Paul was a persecutor of the church. Peter betrayed Jesus. Not the most impressive resumes for the writers of Holy Scripture.

The Bible is written by 40 authors of different cultures, backgrounds, education, occupations including kings, peasants, shepherds, doctors, fishermen, tax collectors, scholars, all writing in a vast variety of locations including wilderness, dungeon, palace, prison, at home, in exile on an island.

It is written over a period of 1600 years, from 1500 BC by Moses to 100 AD by John. It is written in three languages Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.

It is written in different times: war, peace, poverty, prosperity, freedom and slavery, reflecting a wide range of moods and emotions from the heights of joy to the depths of despair.

The 40 writers of the 66 books of the Bible weren't inspired the way an artist or musician or authors might talk about being inspired. Rather each book of the Bible was quite literally breathed out by God Himself.

II Peter 1:20-21 No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Regarding the NT authorship:

"Christ appointed the apostles as witnesses. On the basis of what they had directly seen and heard, and on the basis of the work of the Holy Spirit inspiring them, they could testify authoritatively for all time concerning what Christ accomplished. In their verbal

witness, they had an unrepeatable prophetic role. The apostles and closely associated “apostolic men,” including Mark, Luke, and Jude, wrote the books of the New Testament” (Vern Poythress).

Message of Bible and the NT

When we talk about the 1600 years over which the Bible was written, the three languages, the 40 different authors from every imaginable walk of life and vocation and profession and background, the question that should come to mind is how in the world can there be any hope of a coherent, consistent, unified message without contradiction.

This reality alone proves the miraculously divine, holy character of the Bible. It is the Word of God. There is nothing else like it in the world.

The Bible is one book with one author and one subject: one consistent, unified story. It is God’s story written, preserved and protected by God.

The Bible is not about us. The Bible is not about what people have done for God. The Bible is not first and foremost about our salvation. The Bible is about God, who chose to create all things for His glory. His work of redemption is for the revelation of His glory.

God’s ultimate goal is to display His infinite greatness and worth, in a word, His glory.

This is why Jesus figures most supremely in Scripture, He is the perfect reflection of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:1-3).

II Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The fulness of the glory of God was an object of hope in the OT. Now the glory of God is revealed in greater fulness in the NT.

The message of the Bible simply put is that in the OT God made promises, and in the NT those promises are kept. And as was the case with every fulfilled prophecy and every miracle, the key lesson we are to take away is God is faithful and can be trusted absolutely.

The Bible challenges us every day asking us will you believe and trust and obey God.

Our series of advent sermons on the OT covenants sets us up well for the fulfillment in the NT. God made lavish promises in the OT.

II Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God find their *Yes* in [Christ]. That is why it is through him that we utter our *Amen* to God for his glory.

All the covenants converge in this glorious sunrise. Redemption promised in Eden, blessing sworn to Abraham, holiness required at Mt. Sinai, and eternal kingship pledged to David—all rise together in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 4:4-5 When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Christmas proclaims God has not forgotten His promises. He has remembered them all, and He has kept them in His Son, who is the covenant Redeemer, Blessing-giver, Law-keeper, and King of all kings.

Implications and application.

Being familiar with Jesus can be dangerous. Familiarity breeds contempt. The people of Nazareth were so familiar with Jesus they couldn't believe He was the Messiah.

We are so long this side of the beginning of the NT, so familiar with the words of the NT that they are old hat, we have heard all of this already, maybe it has lost some of their luster.

As we come to the books of the NT I urge you to hear them with new ears, like the Jews and Gentiles who heard them for the first time and believed.

II Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Psalms 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who[se]...delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Joshua 1:8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Don't be hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word. Don't just be readers of God's Word, but take it to heart, believe it and live it. In this is eternal life.

For next week read the book of Hebrews and ask yourself why Pastor Robert is starting our walk through the NT with the book of Hebrews.