

What to Expect from Worship in 2017-2018

On Sunday, September 10th we will start a new series of Worship services that will run from fall to May 20th. While there will be series within the series, there is an intentional plan for Worship that will begin with Genesis 1 and end with the celebration of Pentecost. I thought it might be helpful to say a little bit about what we can expect this school year.

Our series is guided by the Narrative Lectionary. I'm of the generations of preachers that was trained to use a lectionary. Lectionaries are lists of Scripture readings assigned for the Sundays of the year, most being multi-year series. The advantage of a lectionary, as I was taught, is that a preacher gets led into parts of the Bible that might not otherwise be part of worship. It means that congregations get led into parts of the Bible that they might not otherwise encounter. It's meant as a discipline to avoid the temptation for a preacher to read (and a congregation to hear) only the parts of the Bible that interest and excite the preacher. That makes sense to me, and while I've not always preached from the lectionary, I've found that it takes deliberate effort to preach from places other than the Gospels and the letters of Paul. Since all of the Bible is sacred Scripture, and "all scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," (2 Timothy 3:16), as a preacher I do you all a disservice if I preach on only part of it most of the time.

So here are some things that you can expect:

- You can expect our Worship to be centered on Scripture. I've preached on topics, and that's not an evil thing, but we'll be focusing on the Scripture for our themes.
- You can expect to get things in the order in which they appear in Scripture. We'll start in Genesis, then move to Exodus. We won't go verse by verse and we won't cover everything, but we will hear about David before we hear from Isaiah and from the minor prophets before we get to the Gospel.
- The first goal of the Narrative Lectionary is to cover the whole breadth of the Bible in the order that we find it in the Bible—to put the Biblical stories in their Biblical context. The second goal of the Narrative Lectionary is to cover the important events of Jesus' life, so we start with Jesus' birth around Christmas, get crucifixion and resurrection Scriptures around Easter, and end with Jesus' Ascension and Pentecost.
- As this is a four-year cycle, each year focuses on a specific Gospel. This year is John. So you can expect that we'll start in the beginning of John and work our way through the Gospel in order. Again, not verse by verse, but within the boundaries of Christmas and Easter on the calendar, we'll cover John's Gospel without a bunch of jumping around.
- You can expect that our Worship planning will be bathed in prayer. It may not sound like it, but this process is not on rails—the Holy Spirit invades, inspires and leads every aspect of our planning.
- You can expect that we will engage three questions in our Worship and especially in preaching: What does this passage mean? So what does it mean for me? Now what do I need to do in response?

I expect that if you Worship with us every week you'll have a clearer picture of the Biblical story and some things to consider about how to live out what the Bible teaches. My hope is what we do in

Worship will help you get even more excited about the Bible and Christ-centered living—that through our Worship you will be drawn closer and closer to Christ.

Grace to you and Peace,

-Pastor Jim