

St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church
Family Lectionary
2018

September 9

Creation

Genesis 2:4-25

Our 2017-2018 Family Lectionary took us on a journey from Creation, through the story of Israel, culminating in the life and work of Jesus and his call to the Church. We take a similar journey now, rooted in that same story, but with new chapters and perspectives. Here in Genesis 2, we see again the story of Creation, but now in a different light from the last chapter. Here God breathes life into humanity, and then gives them a good creation in which to dwell. Given the authority to order and make sense of their world, Adam and Eve are yet given a warning.

Questions for Discussion:

How is this story different from Genesis 1? Why do you think it's different?

In Hebrew, the word for "breath" is the same word for "spirit." Verse 7 tells us that God formed Adam from the clay and then "breathed" into him the "breath of life." What does this tell us about life and the human spirit?

God declares that it is not good that Adam should be alone, and brings Eve forth from Adam's own flesh and bone. We are all, in some sense, a part of each other, and we need each other. Does this influence how we think about and treat each other?

God gives Adam the authority to give names to the plants and animals in the garden. Humans are given a curiosity about creation, and the power of language to give order to it through language. How should Christians feel about science and the quest for knowledge about creation?

At the same time, God tells Adam that they are not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Human knowledge and human freedom will always have limits. We are not the masters of creation, God is. What happens when humans try to break those limits?

September 16

The Fall

Genesis 3:1-13

We consider again the story of the Fall. The creation stories of Genesis tell of how God created a good world and gave it to humanity to tend and care for, yet God has also set limits. Humans are to order creation, but are not really the masters of it. We are not God. Yet Adam and Eve almost immediately trespass against God's limits, led by the serpent's promise that they could be like God. Their selfishness will be their doom.

Questions for Discussion:

What do you think it means that God set limits upon humanity? Why set the tree in the garden, if they were not to touch it?

So far in Genesis, Adam and Eve have heard two voices. There is the voice of God, and the voice of the serpent. How are these voices different? What is each voice calling upon them to do?

Adam and Eve had a choice. They could remain obedient to God and enjoy all of God's other blessings, or they could follow their own selfish desires and try to seize God's power for themselves. Are there ways that we try to seize God's power? What are the consequences when we do?

Adam and Eve suddenly realize they are naked, and they go to fashion clothes for themselves. If God has made them, and knows what they look like, why are they ashamed? What else could their "nakedness" mean?

When God asks Adam why he ate of the fruit, he puts the blame on Eve. Eve, in turn, places the blame upon the serpent. Why do we so often seek to blame others for our own sins and failures?

Everything changes for humanity as a result of this story. In trying to reach out for the knowledge and power of God, Adam and Eve lose the very blessings of life and immortality that they had already possessed. In many ways the Fall is not a single event, but a continuing failure by humanity to live up to God's promise and blessing. In what ways do we ourselves fail? What are the consequences of our own disobedience?

September 23

Covenant with Noah
Genesis 9:1-17

In many ways, the Fall continues even after Adam and Eve. The generations that came after them proved just as selfish and wicked. In consequence the story is told of how God destroyed the world in a flood, in order to begin again with Noah and his family. Yet as cruel and vengeful as this sounds, it is also a lesson in God's mercy and love. In this passage, God makes a new covenant with Noah, a promise to never again flood the earth. Though humanity may be worthy of destruction, this is not ultimately what God wants.

Questions for Discussion:

God makes a new covenant, not only with Noah, but with the whole of creation, to never destroy the world again by flood. What does it say to you that God makes this promise with all living creatures?

This story begins a long theme in the Bible of "covenant." God makes certain promises to humanity, and asks us to make promises back to God. What promises have you made to God? How do you live them out?

Though destructive, the flood seems to cleanse the earth, and give it a new beginning. But Noah and his family continue to be sinful human beings, so the problem of sin and rebellion ultimately is not solved by the flood. Yet God makes this covenant with them anyway. What does this tell us about our Baptismal vows and the promise God makes to us?

The rainbow becomes a sign of God's promise. Rainbows only form when there is both rain and sunlight. No matter how dark the rainclouds may threaten, there will be light to be found. How do you find comfort when the storms of life threaten you? Where do you look for the light? Are there reminders, like rainbows, that point you to God's promise?

Floods were an ancient symbol of chaos and destruction. In the chaos of life, we may often find ourselves wondering why God does not simply wipe everything away and start over. What does this story tell us about why God would not choose to do that?

September 30

Covenant with Abraham
Genesis 17:1-9

Building on the promise God made to Noah and all of creation, God makes a covenant with Abraham and with his descendants. Though an old man, Abraham will yet become the ancestor of a great nation, a people called to be a light to the nations. In the midst of the continuing problem of sin and selfishness, Israel will be an example of what covenant faithfulness and holiness can look like.

Questions for Discussion:

Abram is nearly 100 years old, when God appears to him, promising to make him a father of many nations. People often feel that it is too late for them to develop a meaningful relationship with God. What does this story tell us about God's timing, and who is worthy of God's attention?

God made a covenant with Noah and all of creation, now God makes a covenant with Abram and the people of Israel. God will be THE God of Israel, and Israel will be God's people. But the covenant with Israel is to be a benefit to all people and all creation. How can we be a light to the nations? Is your life of faith a benefit to those around you?

God's covenant is with Abram and his descendants. What are we doing to pass on the faith to future generations?

The rest of the Old Testament is the story of Israel's struggles to live up their part of the covenant. What struggles do you have in your life of faith? Is God still faithful to God's promise to you?

God gives Abram and Sarai new names. The covenant has given them a new identity in God's eyes – Abraham and Sarah. It was the ancient custom of the Church to give someone a new name at Baptism. How does relationship with God transform us? Is faith a part of your identity?

In our liturgy, we use the word "covenant" for the promises that we make at Baptism. What does it mean for us to say that God will be our God, and we will be God's people? How do we live out and express our covenant promises to God?