

Genesis: Foundations of the Christian Faith

In the season of Pentecost Year A, we plan to use the Old Testament lesson for Trinity Sunday from Genesis chapter 1 to springboard into a non-liturgical series based on Genesis 1-3. These first chapters of the Bible reveal so many central truths of the Christian faith, all while remaining relevant to the relationships we have in this world. We'll see who God is, who we were created to be, and what we have become. We'll find our purpose in this world and who we are in Christ. Join us as we go back to the beginning, back to the Garden of Eden.

Trinity Sunday - Genesis 1:1 - 2:3 - The Trinity (The relationship within the Godhead)

P2 - Genesis 1:26-28 - Image of God (Our relationship with God)

P3 - Genesis 2:4-15 - Work (Opportunities for meaningful service)

P4 - Genesis 2:16-24 - Relationships with each other

P5 - Genesis 3:1-24 - Original Sin (Relationships destroyed)

P6 - Genesis 3:15 - The Promise (Relationships Restored)

Trinity Sunday Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

We plan to follow the appointed lectionary readings for Trinity Sunday and preach on Genesis 1:1-2:3. The Gospel is **Matthew 28:16-20** and the epistle lesson is **2 Corinthians 13:11-14**. The preacher will especially focus on who this Creator is: God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, working together with the Spirit who was hovering over the waters (1:2), and Christ, who was with God in the beginning, through whom all things were made (John 1:1-3).

Second Sunday after Pentecost Genesis 1:26-28

Starting this Sunday, we have chosen alternate readings that correspond to the lessons from Genesis. Since we are in Year A of the lectionary, most lessons are from Matthew and John. The focus of this Sunday is "This Image of God." Many Christians have a misunderstanding of what the image of God is and isn't. Adam and Eve corresponded perfectly to God's will, his holiness, and his righteousness. The image would be lost (we will mention this, but be sure to save some preaching for week 5). The suggested corresponding readings are **Colossians 3:1-11** (the image being restored in us through faith) and **John 3:16-21** (we find our value in what God was willing to pay for us, his only Son, more so than our creation in God's image). For further study: Four Branches Review "Are We the Image of God?" December 2019 - February 2020 <https://www.wls.wels.net/four-branches-december-2019/>. Also check out J.P. Meyer's essay on the topic from the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary essay file <https://essays.wls.wels.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/3298/MeyerImage.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Third Sunday after Pentecost Genesis 2:4-15

Suggested epistle lesson: **2 Thessalonians 3:6-16**. We plan to use the standard Gospel for the day - **Matthew 9:9-13**. We will focus on the gift of work that God gave already in the garden. Work is not meant to be toil and pain, but rather, a fulfilling opportunity for meaningful service. God continues to provide for us through the gift of work, and he encourages us to work hard as if we are working for the Lord (see epistle lesson and Colossians 3:22-25). The Gospel shows that as we work, we also have the opportunity to share our faith with coworkers and invite them to meet Jesus.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost Genesis 2:16-24

Suggested readings: **Ephesians 5:21-33; Matthew 19:1-11**. This section gives the preacher an opportunity to talk about the relationships God created us to have with each other. We are planning to preach on the relationships between men and women, especially in the context of marriage. We might expand the discussion in a Bible study to include the unique and complementary callings of men and women in other contexts as well (the church and society for example). The preacher could also choose to focus on the need for community. The suggested corresponding readings focus on marriage.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost Genesis 3:1-24

Suggested readings: **Romans 3:9-20; John 3:1-15**. With these last two sermons, the preacher will have to be especially careful as he plans so that he doesn't overlap too much before the next week which zeros in on Genesis 3:15. This week is an opportunity to focus on original sin and how serious it is. It destroys all the good relationships mentioned in the previous weeks, and it messes up our opportunities for meaningful service. The Romans passage proves we are all lost in sin, and the Gospel shows that flesh gives birth to flesh. We need a solution. We need a Savior. God would provide exactly what we need. A preacher *could* choose to say everything this week and end the series here, but we are planning to hold off this week on digging deep into Genesis 3:15 and hit it hard the following week. Perhaps the preacher could incorporate the image of the snake on the pole from the gospel lesson and contrast it with the snake on the tree in Genesis?

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost Genesis 3:15

Suggested readings: **1 John 3:1-8; Matthew 27:45-54**. We plan to spend the whole sermon explaining and preaching the good news from this first gospel promise. The pastor might consider having a "fill in the blank" in the bulletin to help congregation members identify what this passage refers to with its somewhat obscure references and challenging language (enmity, seed, etc.) The 1 John lesson shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy. He came to destroy the devil and his work. I am also planning to explain this passage by referencing the Old Testament sacrificial system and the thick curtain that separates people from God in the Most Holy Place. Since the sin in the garden, there was a wall of hostility between people and God. God was promising to move that wall back to where it belonged, between humans and Satan. When Jesus dies on the cross (Gospel lesson), the curtain rips in two. We can now enter God's presence with confidence. The Promised Child of the Woman has crushed Satan's head, even as his heel was struck. The artist "Full of Eyes" portrays this connection with the cross and the serpent vividly in his art. I plan on referencing it during my sermon - here is one example:

<https://www.fullofeyes.com/project/genesis-315/>

God bless you and your congregations as you preach the Word, starting in the beginning.

- Pastor Marques Nelson