

Pastor's Class  
February 18 and 21, 2010  
Opening Your Bible: How Lutherans Approach the Bible  
Rev. Dr. Arthur Bergren

Welcome/Prayer

Our Time Together

Prayer

Everyone receives a copy of my Teaching Notes

Interrupt often – Questions are always welcomed

No one will be put on the spot

Record

Bible Basics

Origin

Oral Tradition: Story

Old Testament: Careful Recording

New Testament: Multiple Transcripts

Old Testament: Story of Israel

Torah/Pentateuch: First Five Books

History

Writings: Poetry/Hymns

Prophet

39 Books

Key Theme: How to make sense of the Babylonian Exile and  
Restoration to Jerusalem.

New Testament: Story of the Messiah and his Church

Gospel

Letters of Paul

General Letters and Revelation

27 Books

Key Theme: Who is Jesus and how are his followers to live.

Book of Faith Initiative

2007 ELCA Churchwide Assembly: Approved 5 Year Program

Goal: *“That the whole church become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word.”*

Definition: Inspired Word of God

God/Humanity – Scripture – Jesus

Truth: Jesus Christ

Faith and Reason coexist

God inspiring humanity to reflect the Christ

The Word of God articulated in our constitution

C 2.02a God speaks in Jesus Christ

C 2.02b God speaks through believers telling the story of God's love in Jesus Christ

C 2.02c God speaks through the Bible

C 2.01a "Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made whose life, death and resurrection God fashions a new creation."

Five Key Lutheran Principles

1. Law and Gospel

Law:

Accuses us and judges us

Reveals our brokenness

Gospel:

Comforts and saves us

Provides us with wholeness

Misconceptions:

Law: Bad and Gospel: Good

2. What Shows Forth Christ

Bible (New and Old Testament) is the book that reveals Jesus Christ

Leads us into a relationship with Christ and his people

Luther

Bible is like the manger that held the Christ Child

Liturgically embody this concept out in worship

Rise at the Gospel Reading

But not for Old Testament or New Testament Readings

3. Scripture Interprets Scripture

Contradictions and the need to settle those contradictions

Slavery:

For Slavery: Col 3:22-24

Against Slavery: John 8:32, Gal 3:28

Jesus' Words

John 1:1-5, 14

John 13:34-35

Matt 5:21-22

## Core Meaning of Scripture

The Cross

Justification by Grace through Faith Alone

Love

### 4. The Plain Meaning of the Text

Seek to understand what the original readers understood

Understand the Intent of the Biblical Author

Need to understand history and context of scripture

Key Question

“How were people expected to understand this piece of scripture in the first place?”

Study Bibles

Translation: NRSV

Harper Collins Study Bible

Lutheran Study Bible

### 5. Public Interpretation

Biblical Record:

Old Testament: God speaking to Israel

New Testament: God speaking to the Church

God speaks to Community

Biblical Interpretation: Communal Activity

Beliefs of the Community Matter

We interpret scripture in community

Not Discounting

Personal Devotions

Personal Biblical Reading

No Secret, Private Messages within scripture

If so, it means God has favorites

Point: Origin for all Interpretation is Christian Community

Closing Prayer

Next Time

February 25 or 28

Opening Your Bible: Reading Scripture with a Spiritual Focus