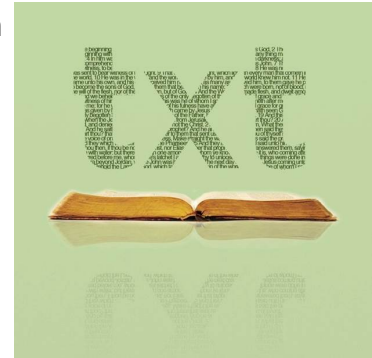


Graphics, Audio and Video - Media Notes are highlighted with this background color

- There is a sermon starter video.
- The only graphics during the sermon are referencing the scripture passage again.



Key Questions, Metadata and Outline

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the books of New Testament, how it was formed and it's overarching message.

Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important because it knowing more about the nature and message of the New Testament may help people want to read the Bible, learn more and live out its words.

What is the context of this sermon?

Some of the key resources for this sermon and series include: The New Testament in 30 minutes sermon by Adam Hamilton (<http://j.mp/1puAlyr>), Wrestling with the Bible sermon series at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection (<http://j.mp/1kl57IS>), txt sermon series at LifeChurch.tv (<http://j.mp/1t5aqv7>) and the book Making Sense of the Bible by Adam Hamilton.

What are the next action steps?

The next action steps are to: read the Bible, meditate on its words and live by them.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that, in the end, evil and brokenness is never the final word. God loves all people and has a purpose and plan for you.

Metadata

- Topic(s)
 - Bible
- Sermon Books of the Bible
 - 2 Peter,
- Series
 - txt: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture
 - The Bible is much more than a book of stories and rules from the past. It's rich with a relevant message God has for us today. Join us as we discover how to engage with the Bible like never before and how to apply it to our lives each and

every day.

- Speaker
 - Andrew Conard
- Tags
 - New Testament, Bible, 2 Peter, life, read, book, message, Jesus, good news,

Outline

[Graphics, Audio and Video - Media Notes are highlighted with this background color](#)

[Key Questions, Metadata and Outline](#)

[What is this sermon about?](#)

[Why is this sermon important?](#)

[What is the context of this sermon?](#)

[What are the next action steps?](#)

[What is the good news \(bottom line\)?](#)

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[God's Response to Brokenness](#)
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2 Peter 3:14-18, CEB

14 Therefore, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found by him in peace—pure and faultless. 15 Consider the patience of our Lord to be salvation, just as our dear friend and brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, 16 speaking of these things in all his letters. Some of his remarks are hard to understand, and people who are ignorant and whose faith is weak twist them to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.

17 Therefore, dear friends, since you have been warned in advance, be on guard so that you aren't led off course into the error of sinful people, and lose your own safe position. 18 Instead, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him belongs glory now and forever. Amen.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Sermon Starter Video

- Play sermon starter video.
-

Introduction

Introduction

Today, we continue our series, txt: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture, with an overview of the New Testament. You will find an insert in your bulletin that gives a timeline of some of the events of the New Testament along with world events. On the opposite side, you will find a list of all of the books of the New Testament as we find them in our Bible. You might have these available, as well as your bulletin.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you

heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Opening Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Old Testament and New Testament Comparison

Last week we looked at an overview of the Old Testament and I want to begin with a comparison between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

There are just over 23,000 verses in the Old Testament and almost 8,000 verses in the New Testament. This means that the New Testament, by verse count, is about one-fourth of the Bible and the Old Testament is three-fourths. For the earliest Christians, their Bible was the Old Testament and they looked to those scriptures as pointing to Jesus.

Transition

So, it is literally words on a page, part of the Bible, but what is the New Testament? What kind of book is it?

What is the New Testament?

The New Testament is a compilation of twenty-seven documents different documents from the first century, most of which were letters. They are the earliest documents written by Christians. They represent the earliest thinking about Jesus, the earliest implications of the gospel and the earliest attempts to write down the stories of Jesus that we possess.

Narrative

Out of these twenty-seven documents, five of them are narratives—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts. The four gospels seek to summarize the life and teachings of Jesus and focus primarily on his death and resurrection. The book of Acts tells the story of Jesus and of the early church after Jesus ascended to heaven.

Letters

Everything else in the New Testament are letters. Even the book of Revelation was a letter written to seven churches in modern day Turkey. They were all written to different individuals or churches.

Transition

With that introduction, let's take a closer look at each of the books of the New Testament.

Gospels and Acts

Matthew

We begin with Matthew. It is thought that Matthew was first written in Hebrew and later written in Greek, the language of the New Testament. It was written to Jewish people to convince them that Jesus is the Messiah. It is located closest to the Old Testament in the Bible and Matthew quotes the Old Testament more than any other gospel to help the reader see how Jesus fulfills the prophets.

Mark

The gospel of Mark was probably written at a time when Christians were facing persecution in the city of Rome. Mark seems to be addressing some of the issues connected with persecution and how Christians would handle it.

Luke

The gospel of Luke was written to gentile, non-Jewish, Christians by a gentile Christian—Luke. Luke was a physician and the traveling companion of Paul. He was particularly concerned for the down and out, outcasts and the nobodies of his day. In Luke, Jesus is particularly concerned with sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes and women who were considered second class citizens at the time.

John

John is writing at a time when the Jewish Christians were being persecuted by the Jews who were not Christians. They were being expelled from the synagogue. You see that conflict when you are reading John's gospel.

John offers a very theologically developed story of Jesus. He wants to make clear Jesus identity and his importance. When he tells the birth story of Jesus, he doesn't say there were shepherds, angel and a stable. He says: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning. ... The Word became flesh and made his home among us."¹

Synoptic and Spiritual Gospel

The first three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the synoptic gospels, which means to see together. They contain very similar content. It is likely that Matthew and Luke had access to Mark and drew from it when they were writing. John is quite different and in the early church was referred to as the spiritual gospel.

¹ John 1:1-2, 14, CEB.

Acts

After the four gospels, we come to the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Acts was written by Luke and it was the sequel of his gospel. We often think of Paul as writing most of the New Testament, which is true if you look at the number of books, however by verses, Luke writes most of the New Testament, when you combine Luke and Acts.

Acts tells the story of the beginning of the church to just before the death of Peter and Paul. This sets the stage for everything else in the New Testament which are the writings of the apostles to the early churches as they were forming them.

Writings of Paul

Next we find the writings of Paul gathered together and organized in two groups in this way: Paul's letters to churches and Paul's letters to individuals. Within each these groups they are organized, not very spiritually, by length, from longest to shortest.

Letters to Churches

First, the letters to the churches:

- Romans
- 1 and 2 Corinthians
- Galatians - actually a little bit shorter than Ephesians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Letters to Individuals

Then, the letters to individuals:

- 1 and 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon

Hebrews

Next comes Hebrews. The early church debated about whether Paul wrote Hebrews. They eventually decided that he did not write Hebrews, but it sounds so much like Paul that they put it next to Paul's writings in the New Testament.

General Epistles

Then come what are known as the general epistles. These are letters that were, for the most part, written to large groups of the Christian church.

- James
- 1 and 2 Peter
- 1, 2 and 3 John - Again, in order by length
- Jude

Revelation

Revelation came at the very end because it deals with the end times—everything that will happen at the end of time with the Lord's return.

Transition

That is all twenty-seven books of the New Testament. So, who decided what made it in the New Testament and what did not?

How was the New Testament formed?

Authority of Paul's Letters

After Paul's death, the churches who had Paul's letters said, you know what? This is something really special. This is the founder of our church and when we read this letter we hear God speaking through it. It has authority for us.

Letters to Many Churches and Individuals

Then they recognize that Paul wrote letters to many different churches. The Philippians ask the Ephesians, Didn't Paul write you a letter too? If you copy your letter and send it to us, we will copy our letter and send it to you. Then those individuals who had letters began to share those letters. All of these letters began to be collected and passed around from church to church.

2 Peter References Paul's Letters

We have clues to this process from the scripture passage that was read today from 2 Peter. Hear these words again from **2 Peter 3:15-16**:

Consider the patience of our Lord to be salvation, just as our dear friend and brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, speaking of these things in all his letters. Some of his remarks are hard to understand, and people who are ignorant and whose faith is weak twist them to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.

Did you hear that, in verse 16?

16 speaking of these things in all his letters.

Before the end of the New Testament era, the writer of 2 Peter knows about Paul's letters, because they have been gathered together and started to circulate already.

Hard to Understand Paul

Then he writes:

... Some of his remarks are hard to understand, ...

This is great! One of the New Testament authors found Paul difficult to understand. That gives you permission to not understand everything by the apostle Paul.

Reference the Hebrew Bible

Then he continues:

... people who are ignorant and whose faith is weak twist them to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.

The other scriptures that is being referenced here is the Hebrew Bible. It clearly had authority. Now, Paul's letters are being seen as something similar to the writing of the rest of the Bible or the other scriptures.

Canonization - Formation of the New Testament

This is the process of canonization, which is a word that is used to describe the formation of the New Testament:

- By the end of the first century Paul's writings are already circulating with a certain weight of authority and the gospels were written.
- By the beginning of the second century, the four gospels were collected and being passed around together. While there were other individual gospels, none were understood to have the same authority as that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
- By the end of the second century it seems that the gospels had been connected together with the letters of Paul and the other letters were brought together, including Revelation.
- By the end of the third century, there was a general consensus of what most of the books of the New Testament were. Yet there was still some debate about books like 2 Peter and even the book of Revelation.
- By the end of the fourth century, there was clear agreement around these 27 books that you have in the New Testament.

We look at this process and these books and see that the Holy Spirit was involved in preparing these books to tell the story of God in Jesus Christ, the early church and to help us in our Christian life.

Story of the New Testament

God's Response to Brokenness

The New Testament is the story of Jesus Christ, the message of God's kingdom and how it spread across the world.

It is the story of God's love for humankind.

It is the story of God's response to the brokenness of this world and the evil, tragedy and suffering that we often see around us.

God saw our suffering, struggling with death and sin. God chose not to leave us alone, but instead God chose to walk among us as a human being. He chose to show us the way, the truth and the life—to teach us by his words and example.

A Revolution of the Heart

He came to lead a revolution of the heart, not one of military power. In this revolution, he would call people to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength and to love their neighbor as themselves.

He would tell them that the way of life is not found in violence and vengeance.

The way of life is found in:

- Forgiveness and mercy
- Loving your neighbor and even loving your enemy.
- Seeing people who are hurting and showing compassion.
- Humility and not in pridefulness.

It is found in your willingness to lay down your life for others.

Death and Resurrection

Then he modeled that for us. On the cross, Jesus took all the pain, sins and evil of the world on himself. He died. But on the third day, he rose again to show clearly and conclusively that evil, suffering and even death will never be the final word.

Overarching Message

This is the overarching message of the New Testament. As one of the great theologians of the last century, Karl Barth, said I can summarize the gospel in one phrase: Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

Live Out the Message

The rest of the epistles tell us how to live that out. Revelation says that no matter how dark things may be, in the end, there will be a reckoning day and the Lord himself will come back and he will make all things right.

Conclusion

That is a word that we need to hear in month's like this. When we see the brokenness in our world clearly in senseless violence that seems to have no meaning. We watch what happens in other parts of the world where violence is unleashed in war-torn countries. In all of this we remember that the Bible recognizes that there is a brokenness in the world. The Lord

himself suffered under the hands of those who were willing to be act out this kind of evil.

Good News

The good news is that, in the end, evil and brokenness is never the final word. God loves all people and has a purpose and plan for you. He suffers and dies for our sins and our salvation. He is raised up to give us hope and life.

Call to Action

That brings us to this story of a friend and colleague of mine who is pastor in the Great Plains Conference. He had received a call that Helen, one of the saints of their church, was nearing the final days of her life. Helen had been involved in the lives of others in countless ways over the years. If there was a need in the church, Helen signed up.

My friend went to visit Helen in her hospital room and said, "I am so sorry that you are in this situation."

She replied, "It's okay, I'm ready."

They shared scripture and prayed together.

She died early the next morning.

My friend went to meet with Helen's family the next day to hear stories of her life and plan the service. One of the things that her family shared the Bible that she read every day and the notebook where she wrote reflections and notes on the scriptures.

Then her sister said, "You know, her Bible is really worn. I was thinking that, maybe, we could put it in the casket with her so she would be buried with it. Do you think that would be okay?"

My friend said, "I think that would be great, because this was the book that shaped her life."

That is my hope for you and for me.

Invitation

I hope that someday when some pastor is preparing my funeral, or yours, that one of our family members would say "You know, they read the Bible constantly. They meditated on its words and lived by them. This is the book that shaped their life. That is my hope for us today.

Will you pray with me?

Closing Prayer

Thank you, O God, for the words of scripture. Help us to grow in the grace and

knowledge of Jesus by opening your word. By your Holy Spirit, put in each of us a deep desire to read the Bible and be shaped by its words. Help us be people of your book. In Jesus name, Amen.