

The very best stories always have a beginning, a middle, and an end. All three parts of these are present in every story that you read that you hear about their president in our own lives as well, and they are present in each of the images here in our stained-glass windows. Over the past several weeks, we've been looking at each of these symbols and considering the stories from scripture that they come from and each of these individual stories has a beginning, middle, and end, and together all of them tell the story of scripture from Genesis to revelation. You remember several weeks ago, we looked at this set of images that tells the story of creation, the seven days of both creation and rest. And today we consider the windows over here. They come to us from the very end of the scriptures, from the book of revelation, and they also connect with our story of faith.

This, uh, these images as a set up can be explained or introduced perhaps with a verse from revelation Chapter Four, beginning with verse one. This is the vision of the what is to come after this. I looked and there was a door that it didn't open in heaven. The first voice that I heard, which sounded like a trumpet said to me, come up here and I will show you what must take place after this. At once I was in the spirit inspired trance. I saw a throne in heaven and someone was seated on the throne. Something like a glass. See like Christ was in front of the throne, in the center by the throne. There were four living creatures in circling the throne. These creatures were covered with eyes on the front and on the back. The first living creature was like a lion. The second living creature was like an ox.

The third living creature had a face like a human being, and the fourth living creature was like an eagle in flight. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and each was covered all around and on the inside with eyes. They never rest day or night, but keep on saying, holy, Holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is coming. And these four living creatures are depicted in our stain glass window on either side of the center image of the land. These four images give us a picture of what that heavenly scene is like, and they also connect with each of the four gospels, Matthew, mark, Luke, and John. They tell us something about the nature of Christ and they make an invitation for each of us as followers of Jesus as well. We'll begin with the picture that is on the far left.

This is of the wings, that human or the angel, perhaps the face of a human being. This image is a connected with the Gospel according to Matthew. Part of the reason that these connections are made is because the Bit Gospel, according to Matthew, you may remember, begins with a genealogy. It's, it's quite lengthy. And, and a few of these words were matthew chapter one, a record of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers. I won't read the whole genealogy to for you. A continues for 52 generations. Matthew was making a connection between the people of Israel and Jesus. Also, what's happening here and why the same agents connected is it's a reminder of of the humanity of Jesus, that Jesus is God with us.

It isn't God far off distant and some other place. God came to live among us as a human being. Beginning of the story of Jesus with these generations connects to the past and it reminds us that Jesus is God with us. It also represents for us, it's an invitation to remember that that were created as humans. We are not God and thank goodness for that were created with mines, a reason and an intellect invited to ask questions about our faith, to engage others, to seek, to grow, to love God and to love our neighbor. The wing human reminds us of Jesus. Humanity invites us to live as humans, always seeking to connect with God. The next image is of the lion a. again, you'll notice all of these have a have wings on them. I'm just like was mentioned there and the texts from revelation.

I'm this Elian connects with the book of Mark or the Gospel according to mark and and it comes from again, from the very first versus there in chapter one. You hear these words, the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ. God's son happened just as it was written about in the prophecy of Isaiah. Look, I'm sending my messenger before you. He will prepare your way of voice shouting in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight, and this voice of one shouting of calling in the wilderness is compared, is likened to the roar of a lion. Something that can be heard over all others. Something that stands out there in the wilderness in these verses that reminds us of the line of course, uh, when we think about Jesus and the lion it as a reminder, and it's a symbol of royalty and monarchy.

It represents the kingship of Christ and that Christ is king over all of creation. The royal line is part of what helps remind us of the nature of Jesus as Christians as well. Reminds US assistant named meditation to be bold and courageous. These words we see throughout the oil, uh, old and New Testament, the reminder not to be afraid, the courage perhaps of align to step into whatever God has called us to live into the future, unafraid as what Jesus invites us to do. This picture of the line connects with the gospel of mark, reminds us of Jesus that kingship his royal majesty and invites us to be unafraid into the future that God has for us. We'd go to the left, we'll skip the center image as they are all facing that in the center and continue with the image of the ox. I'm the Ox is associated with the Gospel according to Luke.

Now, perhaps a little bit looser connection here, but you might think about the ox as a symbolizing a couple of different things. The first is as a sign of sacrifice in a ancient Israel, the ox was a part of the sacrificial system and until it was a symbol for the ancient Israelites of, of things that were offered to God. Of course, the ox as well is a sign of strength and it is a beast of burden. It's a symbol of service, and so all of these connect with the Gospel according to Luke and begins, you may remember what the story of Zechariah priest who is serving in the temporal connected here with this system of sacrifice from Luke chapter one during the rule of King Heritage Judea, there was a priest named zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Aba job. His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron.

They were both righteous before God, blameless in their observance of the Lord's Commandments and regulations. One day, Zachariah was serving as a priest before God because his priestly division was on duty. The ox connects with this priestly, a beginning to the gospel. According to Luke, it's a sign of Jesus, his sacrifice for us in his crucifixion, as well as the connection with the high priest, as as the high priest would sacrifice the ocs in ancient Israel. So Christ is our high priest as well as the sacrifice as followers of Jesus. It's a symbol that can remind us that part of our call as disciples is one of sacrifice. The road of following after Jesus is not an easy one, nor does it promise to be one. There are times when we may need to sacrifice to do what God has called us to do. Then the ox reminds us of that.

They image on the far right here is that of an eagle. The Eagle represents the gospel according to John. It's because it has a, uh, an eagle might shore over a creation store over the earth. And so, uh, in a similar way, John has as a very high understanding of Jesus being God of Jesus divinity. You remember the beginning of John a starts with these verses. We read it every Christmas Eve 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, everything came into being through the word and without the word, nothing came into being what came into being through the word was, and the life was the life for all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light. John doesn't start with a genealogy. He doesn't start with a story of a priest. He doesn't even start crying out in the wilderness. John goes back to the very beginning. I reminds us of this connection of Christ overall, the very word of God and the very

beginning of time on internal view of Jesus and goes on to describe Jesus throughout the Gospel with a much higher view of Jesus divinity from the other three gospels.

Yeah,

the Eagle represents Jesus. Divine nature is a session after the resurrection and this overarching view in the gospel. According to John,

for us as followers of Jesus, the eagle can remind us as well to keep our eyes focused on what God has called us to a clear focus on eagle eye, perhaps towards the perfect love of God and neighbor, something that we are all on the journey to become. This is the Eagle and all four of these living, living creatures that facing surrounding the throne in which there is the lamb of God, the lamb at the most common animals, symbol and Christian already wasn't ideal symbol to represent Christ, and this particular lamb has two connections. You'll see there, the scholars would say it's both a lamb that's carrying a banner, um, with the sign of the cross and it's also a lamb that's sitting on a book with seven seals on it. You may remember that the, the lamb with the banner a symbolizes the resurrection and Christ as the Redeemer. We hear this, um, representation from John in the first chapter. The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, look, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Yeah,

this is just after Jesus had been baptized. They see Jesus walking by and the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world is Jesus the redeemer. The book with the, as mentioned in a revelation, it's a part of the story of that book of the Bible and we see it connected here again with the lamb of God. We go back to revelation to hear these words. They took up a new song saying you are worthy to take the scroll to open its seals because you were flying it by your blood. You purchased for God. Persons from every tribe. Language people and nation, you made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they will rule on earth. Then I looked and I heard the sound of many angels surrounding the throne, the living creatures and the elders. They numbered in the millions, thousands upon thousands and they said in a loud voice worthy is a slotted land to receive power, wealth, wisdom and might and honor glory and blessing and I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and the everything everywhere say blessing, honor, glory and power belong to the one seated on the throne and to the lamb forever and always the set of stained glass windows connected to the book of revelation and then they also most importantly connect us with Jesus.

At the center is the lamb of God, and here in revelation all everyone offering words of blessing and honor glory and power to the one who is seated on the throne. Everyone includes you and me. We had the chance to join those voices in heaven that are surrounding the throne of God, praising God forever. The chance to add our voice as a praise on this palm Sunday as we anticipate Jesus resurrection on Easter Day.

OK,

our opportunity to keep our eyes focused, to persevere with strength and courage in the face of difficulties and to remember that Jesus has both human and divine, came to live among us to offer himself for our sake and give us hope eternally

here on earth.

These are some of the stories in our staying loss.

Will you pray with me?

Oh God, we give you thanks for the opportunity to learn more of your story. We asked that you clarify our thoughts, our minds that we might truly follow after you with our heart. No soul, mind and strength. God gives us vision, give us strength and courage and help us always to follow you. In your name we pray. Amen.