

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

East Moline, Illinois

Pastor Becky Sherwood

October 10, 2021, The 20th Sunday After Pentecost/The 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time Bible Sunday

Psalm 119:1-16 (The Message Translation-responsive), Hebrews 4: 12-16

The Library of Faith...For YOU!

This morning's sermon is first of all for the children and youth who got Bibles today, or got Bibles any other year from our church or another church.

But this sermon is also for everyone who owns a Bible, has seen a Bible, or has read a Bible. So basically, this sermon is for all of God's children, but especially the children and youth who got a Bible today, and all the children and youth who have gotten Bibles through the years here on Bible Sunday. The rest of you are welcome to listen in, because of course this sermon is for all of you!

I am so thankful that we are a church who gives Bibles to you children and youth, that you can explore at each age and stage of your life. Your church family wants you to have this book because it is a "Library of Faith," as one of my friends calls it. (Judy Anderson-Bauer)

Has anyone ever told you that when you hold the Bible you are not holding one book, but 66 different books? There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament, and each one is different from the others. The Bible really is a "Library of Faith." It took over 1,000 years of people writing down their stories for us to have the Bible!

When you hold a Bible, you are holding amazing stories, history, poetry, songs and so much more.

There are all kinds of things to read in the Bible. Noah's Ark, Daniel and the Lion's Den, Miriam dancing and singing as they left Egypt, King David writing songs, Jesus feeding 15,000 people, Paul hiking and sailing all around the Mediterranean Sea to tell about Jesus. There are hundreds and hundreds of stories for you to explore.

This year 38 grown-ups in the church are reading their way through the Bible, and every time we meet for classes someone talks about learning something new. You can never get tired of reading the Bible, there is always more to hear and learn!

The Bible is also our story as the family of faith. That is why your church family wants you to have your own Bible. It is the story of our mothers and fathers of faith like Sarah and Abraham, Miriam and Moses, Mary and Martha, Priscilla and Aquilla, and most importantly it is the story of how much God loves you through Jesus.

Your Bible will tell you about how Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem, how he taught people about God, and healed people who were sick, and welcomed everyone--even the people no one liked, to come learn about God.

Your Bible will tell you about Jesus dying on the cross for us,
saving us from our sins,

and three days later rising from death to new life and showing us the promise of heaven.

There's a reason we give you your very own copies of the Bible at four different times in your life. We want you to know that this is your story too. It isn't just a book to read in church by old people like me; the Bible is a book to read all of your life.

- So first the *Baby's First Bible* is read to you by your family.
- Then, when you are four you get the *Beginner's Bible* and first that is read to you too.

But then when you become a reader, you can start reading it yourself. Maybe you can change having your grown-up reading you a bedtime story, and now you can read them a bedtime story from your *Beginners Bible!*

- When you are a 2nd grader, we've picked the Contemporary English Version for you because it's an easier to read grown-up version. I really like this translation. It's the one I use at home when I read the Bible.
- Then when you are in 6th grade and getting ready for Confirmation, we give you the New Revised Standard Version that we usually have here in the pews at the church.

The Bible is a book to read over and over again. Jesus says in the New Testament, "let the little children come to me." (Mark 10:14) We give you your very own Bible so you can learn about Jesus and how much he loves you and wants you to know him.

We, your church family, want each of you to know Jesus' love for you.

In this morning's reading from II Timothy 3: 16-17 we read these words: "All scripture is inspired by God."

What this word inspired means, is that all of the Bible is "God-breathed." (NT Greek) This means God is right there whenever you open your Bible, moving between the words on the page and your heart and life.

One of the amazing gifts of faith is that not only was God's Holy Spirit active when the words were being written, but God's Holy Spirit is active each time we read the Bible.

Scripture is "God-breathed!"

And that is true whether you are a baby or a 2-year-old and someone is reading your *Baby's First Bible* to you and you are looking at the pictures.

Or you are opening your *Beginner's Bible* and picking out the words you can read and thinking about the stories in the pictures you look at.

Or you are a 2nd or 3rd grader or 6th or 7th grader who just got their very own grown-up Bible and you are starting to read it.

God's Holy Spirit doesn't wait for you to be a grown up to be with you when you read the Bible. God is talking to your heart and life every time you read the Bible, whether it's the first time, or like the people around you in your church family, you've been reading your Bible for 20 or 50 or 80 years!

Every time we read the Bible, or have it read to us, God's Holy Spirit is meeting us right in that moment, because the Bible is a living gift, inspired and God-breathed every time we read it.

So, we're not just reading some old words that are 2,000 years old, we are reading and hearing living words that are new over and over again.

We are reading words that have power to speak to us just as they spoke to our mothers and fathers of faith back 100's and even 1000's of years ago. The Bible continues to be our family story.

The story may be about an Exodus from Egypt that took place over 3,000 years ago, but in the stories of wandering in the wilderness and God's faithfulness, you may hear your own stories of wandering through Middle School or High School, or through a world pandemic.

In God's loving faithfulness to those Israelites long ago we are reminded of God's day by day love and faithfulness to us today.

Psalm 23 was written by the shepherd David thousands of years ago, but as God's Holy Spirit breathes through those words we can still be comforted as the words begin: "The Lord is my Shepherd I have everything I need."

As David faces the giant Goliath, we know God will be with us as we face people and things that feel like giants in our lives.

When Jesus says he is like a good shepherd who knows all his sheep by name, and looks for the ones who are lost, we know that Jesus is our Good Shepherd too who knows us by name and looks for us when we feel lost.

The words of the Psalms become our words in times of sadness and times of joy: We can ask with Psalm 13 “How long oh Lord, will you forget me forever?” when life is hard and we feel lost.

Or we can be joyful with Psalm 30 “You have turned my sadness into dancing.” Or say with Psalm 130: “Bless the Lord oh my soul, and let all that is within me bless God’s holy name.”

Jesus’ promises to the disciples back in New Testament times become God-breathed promises for us:

Jesus says to us: “Come to me all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest for your soul.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Or “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 14:27)

Or “I am the Good Shepherd, I know my own and my own know me.” (John 10:14)

Jesus’ challenges to the disciples become challenges to us, as God’s Holy Spirit breathes between the written page and our hearts:

“Jesus says: But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matt. 5:44) Those words challenge us as much as they challenged those who heard them when Jesus first spoke them.

Or “Truly I tell you, just as you cared for one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)

This Sunday is a joy-filled day because we have given you, the children and youth of our church family, a living gift, that God wants all of us to have.

So, in the words of Psalm 34:8 “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” Which means, open your Bible and start reading, you will find wonderful good things in this “Library of Faith!”

And in the words of Psalm 136: “O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good, for God’s steadfast love last forever.”