

DIOCESAN LAY READER TRAINING

Preaching 2

Listening to the Text, the Spirit, and the People

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Any Questions from Last Time?

Recap

- Session 1: Preaching is an act of faithfulness, humility, and service
 - *Preaching is a deeply pastoral act, vital to the life of a parish, cannot underestimate its importance*

In this Session we will...

- Where do I begin my sermon? How do I even start?
- Having nerves is ok, but I hope to take some of the edge off
- First move: Listening to the text, the spirit, and the people

Listening to the Text

- Each week we have four readings: Old Testament, Psalm, New Testament Epistle and the Gospel
- They are NOT all connected
- CHOOSE 1 to preach on, not all four...why??

Revised Common Lectionary

- If you don't know where to find the lectionary, you can access it here:

<https://lectionary.anglican.ca>

ONLINE LECTIONARY

BAS READINGS

BCP READINGS

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

FEEDBACK

Book of Alternative Services

These readings are from the Anglican Church of Canada's adaptation of the Revised Common Lectionary. On Sundays and feast days there is a link to the full readings.

Liturgical Year C: Dec 1, 2024 to Nov 29, 2025
Liturgical Year A: Nov 30, 2025 to Nov 28, 2026

Sunday, November 16th, 2025
Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost [Proper 33] (Green)
Morning Prayer: Ps 66, 67; 1 Macc 2:29-43, 49-50; Acts 28:14b-23; Coll 392
Holy Eucharist: Propers 392; Is 65:17-25; Is 12 (as canticle); 2 Th 3:6-13; Lk 21:5-19; Preface of the Lord's Day
Evening Prayer: Ps 19, 46; (Hab 1:1-4, (5-11), 12-2:1); Lk 16:1-13; Coll 392

2025-11-16

show new date

[Link to full text for this day.](#)

Also available: Daily BCP readings

Download 2025-2026 Year A data in CSV format. [BAS](#) • [BCP](#)

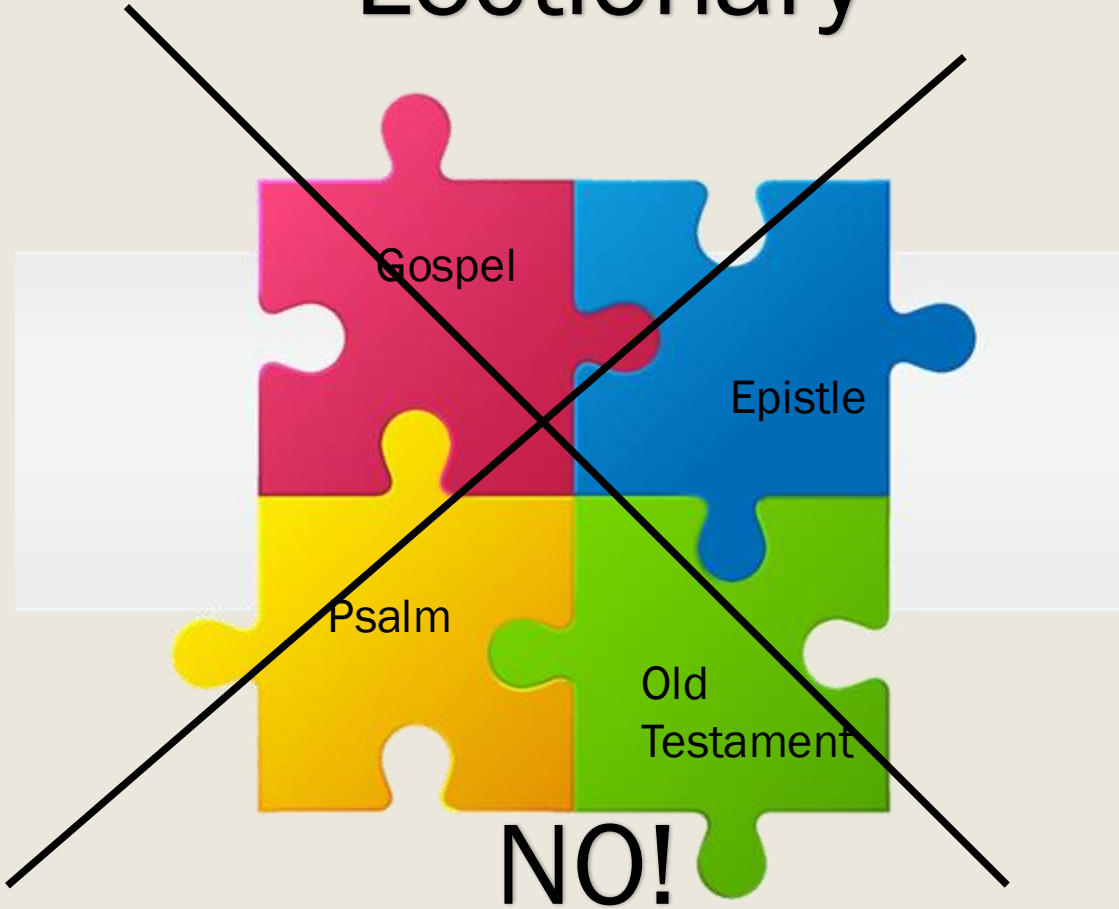
Revised Common Lectionary

- Created in the late 20th Century by a group of churches
- Shared rhythm of scripture, broad balanced diet
- Aimed at preventing preachers from choosing their favourites each week
- Lectionary stretches us

Revised Common Lectionary

- Gospel: centerpiece, we read through Matthew, Mark, and Luke in each of the three liturgical years, John appears during special seasons
- Old Testament: Genesis/Exodus, monarchy, prophets
- Epistles: read through each week
- Psalm: response or stand alone

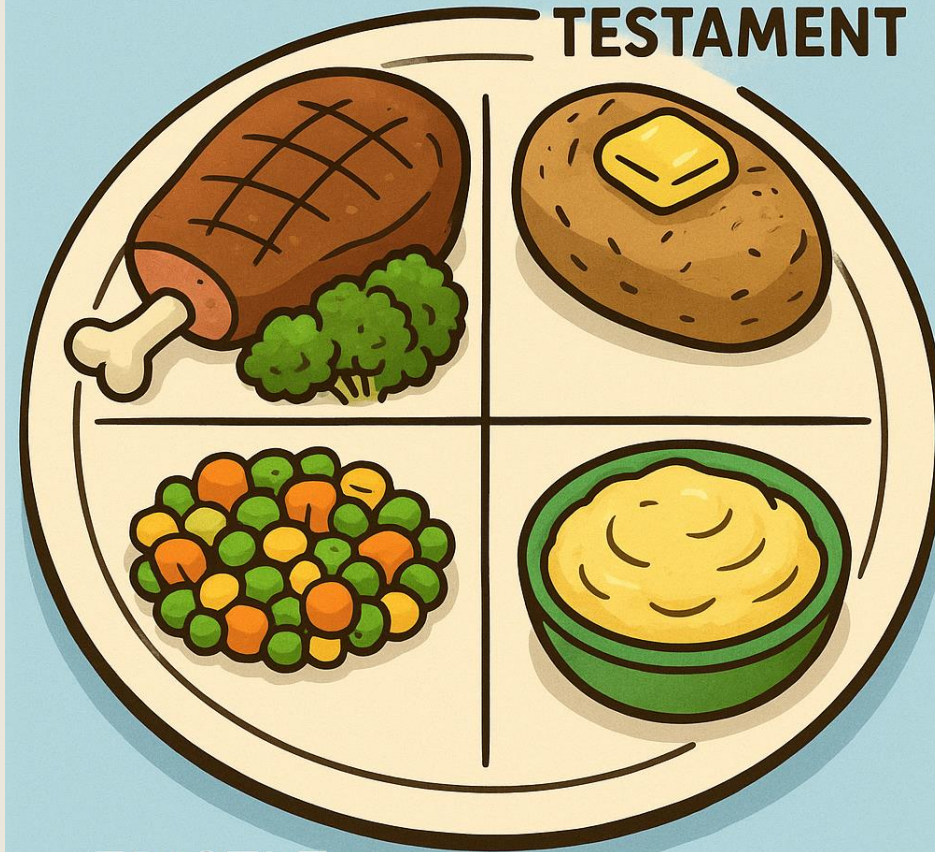
Revised Common Lectionary



REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY

GOSPEL

OLD
TESTAMENT



EPISTLE

PSALM

YES!

Example: Shepherd Sunday, Easter 4

- Psalm 23: The LORD is my Shepherd
 - Ezekiel 34: Woe to the shepherds who destroy the flock
 - John 10: I am the Good Shepherd
 - 1st Peter: The Chief Shepherd
- *Oh these all mention shepherds! I will preach one sermon on this!*

Example: Shepherd Sunday, Easter 4

- Psalm 23: devotional, relationship between believer and God
- Ezekiel 34: prophetic, political critique of corrupt leaders
- John 10: theological, who Jesus is
- 1st Peter: pastoral, urging church leaders to follow Christ's example
 - *Same image, different meaning, different texts, different times, different purpose*
 - *Choose 1 text and let it speak*

Any Questions?

How do we listen to the passage?

- Exegesis: meaning out of a text
- Eisegesis: read meaning into a text
- We want exegesis
 - *Exegesis listens to the text; Eisegesis talks over it*
 - *Let the text set the agenda*

How do we listen to the passage?

- Which passage speaks to you?
- What makes you feel uncomfortable or makes you think??
- Choose 1 and read it carefully, slowly, out loud, different translations
 - *Ask who is speaking? What's happening? What comes before or after? Whats the emotional tone?*

How do we listen to the passage?

- Which passage speaks to you?
- What makes you feel uncomfortable or makes you think??
- Choose 1 and read it carefully, slowly, out loud, different translations
 - *Ask who is speaking? What's happening? What comes before or after? Whats the emotional tone?*

Don't rush to writing your sermon, first and foremost, listen to your one, and only one passage very carefully.

Discussion:

What challenges do you find in choosing one passage?

Do you tend to start with the text or with an idea already in mind?

Any Questions?

Listening to the Spirit

- Spiritual exercise not intellectual
- “spirit help me hear what you want me to hear in this text. Help me notice what I might overlook” (helps you avoid eisegesis, can help you choose the text you are preaching on)
- What stands out to me??

Discussion:

Have you ever felt nudged towards something in a text?

How did you know?

Any Questions?

Listening to the People

- Sermons are never preached into thin air
- Pre-written sermons, make sure to edit with your congregation in mind
- Be present to your congregation: NOT gossiping, but attending coffee hour, engaging in conversations, being aware of prayer requests, celebrations challenges
- It would be tone deaf to preach 'rejoice always' a week after a loss
 - *This is partly why, if you have a rector in place, they will likely want to see any sermons preached, to ensure that these kinds of missteps are not happening*

Listening helps us preach words that
are truly good news...not hollow ones

Discussion:

What are some examples of sermons that really connected with your congregation, and why?

Any Questions?

Research and Reading

- AFTER you have chosen a passage, listened to the spirit, listened to your context, turn to other voices
- Other voices inform and challenge, see what we might have missed
- FOR EVERY SOURCE YOU USE BE CRITICAL! Ask:
 - *Who wrote this? What is their theological lens? Does what they're saying fit the text or are they forcing it? Does this deepen my sense?*

Research and Reading

- <https://www.workingpreacher.org>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Working Preacher website. The header is dark red with a repeating circular pattern. It includes the 'Working Preacher' logo, navigation links for 'Preach This Week', 'Craft of Preaching', 'Bible Index', 'Podcasts', and 'Books', a 'Donate' button, and a search icon. The main content area has a dark red background with the text 'Good Preaching Changes Lives' and 'A resource for the whole church from Luther Seminary.' Below this, there is a calendar for November 2025, a large image of a desert landscape, a statue of Christ the King, and a preview of the First Sunday of Advent.

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A resource for the whole church from Luther Seminary.

Revised Common Lectionary ▾

< November ▾ 2025 ▾ >

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November 16, 2025

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

November 23, 2025

Christ the King

November 30, 2025

First Sunday of Advent

Research and Reading

- As you read notice what you agree with or not
- You don't have to use any of it, just let it shape your interpretation

Example: The Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)

“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.” But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’”

What is the typical interpretation of this passage??

Example: The Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)

- Problem with that interpretation is that it says “Thank you, God, that I am not like the Pharisee,” so we fall into the trap the parable exposes

Example: The Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9- 14)

■ Amy Jill Levine

– *The Jewish New Testament*

PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR (LK 18.9–14)

Some readers dismiss the Pharisee as hypocritical, sanctimonious, and legalistic, and in turn identify with the tax collector, the repentant, humble, and justified sinner. This approach is not surprising, given that Luke has presented numerous maleficent Pharisees as well as several admirable tax collectors. However, once readers choose to identify with the tax collector and reject the Pharisee, the parable traps them: to conclude in effect (following 18.11), “God, I thank you that I am not like this Pharisee . . .” places readers in the very position they condemn. Moreover, this interpretation overlooks the Pharisee’s numerous excellent qualities: tithing, fasting, giving thanks without asking for something in return.

Other readers presume that the tax collector stands “far off” (18.13) because other worshippers ostracize him, believing him to be ritually impure. The parable says nothing about either ostracism or impurity; to the contrary, to enter the Temple a person must be ritually pure. Even were he ostracized,

the cause would not be impurity but employment: he works for Rome, the occupation government.

Still other readers perceive the Temple to have become an elitist, xenophobic, misogynist, fully corrupt “domination system” that Jesus rejects. Again, the parable thwarts this stereotype, since it is in the Temple that repentance and reconciliation occur.

We might rather see the Pharisee as helping the tax collector. Just as the sin of one person impacts the community (e.g., “forgive us our sins” [11.4] rather than “forgive me my sins”); so the merits of the righteous can benefit the community (see Gen 18.24–33; hence one view of the cross: the sacrifice of one can save the many). Jews who first heard this parable (especially if 18.14b, a line that appears in various places in the Gospel, was not original to the parable; see 14.11; Matt 23.12) may well have understood the Pharisee’s merit to have impacted the tax collector. This would be the parable’s shock: not only that the agent of Rome is justified but that the Pharisee’s own good works helped in that justification.

The gift of research:
sometimes one voice, one
comment, one new lens, can
break open a text and help
us see God's Word in a
deeper and more
compassionate way.

After you've listened to the Text, spirit and people...

- Listen to the wider conversation, scholars, preachers, and theologians, let them walk beside you
- NOT because they have the final word, but because together, all these voices help us hear the living Word of God more fully

Questions?

Preaching lives in the tension between
the text and the people.



Build a bridge between all of this, so that
God's Word speaks freshly into the
moment.



What is the good news in this passage
for this congregation at this moment?

A few quick notes...

- Preach one passage only.
- Don't try to be clever — preach what is true and needed.
- Never use the pulpit for personal agendas.
- And start early! Sermon prep takes time and prayer. Don't ever, ever leave it to the last minute.

Where do we begin...

- Listening...to the text, to the spirit, to the people
- Take next Sunday's lectionary readings. Read them all. Notice which one stirs you. Sit with it. Pray with it. Ask the Spirit what you need to hear. Then ask: what might this passage have to say to my congregation right now? Do some reading. What would you write about.

Session Recap

Today, we learned:

- Preaching begins with listening.: Before we write or speak, we listen — to Scripture, to God’s Spirit, and to the lives of our people.
- Choose one passage: Let it speak for itself — don’t flatten or force connections.
- Practice exegesis, not eisegesis — draw out meaning, don’t read your own ideas in.
- Listen prayerfully: Ask, “What is the Spirit nudging me toward?”
- Approach the text and your congregation with humility and openness.
- Know your people. Preach into real lives and contexts — connect God’s Word to their joys and struggles.
- Hold text and people together.
- Build the bridge so that God’s Word speaks freshly into this moment — not as a lecture or performance, but as living good news.
- Read other voices, let them inform your thoughts, don’t assume they have it all right!



Faithful preaching begins with listening