

The Word for the lost and to the found
Judges 4:1-7,
John 1:1-13

According to the United Methodist Church calendar, today is Bible Sunday. The purpose of setting aside this Sunday as “Bible Sunday” is to emphasize the Bible. Today's tendency of religious faith is to see the Bible as a relative truth, rather than the absolute truth. That is the problem of faith. Problematic faith produces problematic life.

Those who believe the Bible as a relative truth intend to seek other, alternative ways for life. They stray from the road they have known, and lose their way as they wander, wondering which way to go. There simply is not enough time in life to wander around without direction, wondering which way to go. Today, we have an opportunity to affirm our way, definitely, to follow for rest of our lives. The Bible is the only way to trust as our guide, our map to follow in truth for our way through life. The Lord said, “I am the way, the truth, and the Life.”

One of the most popular hymns, in every church and in every country, is Amazing Grace. We sing, “I once was lost but now am found; was blind, but now I see.” The hymn contains an essential Christian message, the message of the Bible. The Bible's message is for those who have lost the way that they may find it, and for those who have found the way, that they may follow it to our final destination.

The Bible contains many people's stories, national histories, and varying kinds of religious life theories. But, more importantly, it shows five categories, or themes of truth. These truths may be summed up as the 5Cs: Creation, Covenant, Christ, Church and Culmination. It may help for us to try to memorize those five Cs today.

First, there is creation in the beginning.

The very first words of the Bible says, “In the beginning, God created the heaven and earth.” God created the world intentionally, purposefully, orderly, systematically. But also, God created the world out of love and for love, and when it was finished, God looked at it and said, “This is good!” We call God “all powerful” and absolutely Good.

There have been philosophical arguments for the existence of God. One of them is commonly called the design argument. It is the argument for the existence of God that is the oldest, the clearest, and the most accordant with common reason. Imagine, in Africa a long time ago, a man crossing a field sees a watch lying on the ground. The man has never seen a watch before and does not know what it is or what it is for. What will happen? He picks up the watch and examines it. He finds that it is composed of a metal case and a porcelain dial. He opens it. Inside he finds a complicated, but orderly arrangement of springs and cogged wheels and levers and jewels, all ticking away systematically. He looks at the hands on the dial and he quickly sees that they are moving in a predetermined order.

Now, what does he makes of this? Does he conclude that by chance, all of these intricate parts got thrown together, and made themselves into a watch, and set themselves going?" No. He man concludes, most reasonably, that I have found this thing, a watch. Therefore, somewhere there must be a watchmaker."

One day someone asked me, "Does God really exist?" "Yes. You think, therefore you are. As long as you sense that you are thinking, you exist, and as long as you exist, God exists." I replied. God is the maker and we are ones made by Him. That is faith of creation. The creator God is all powerful and absolute good. This is the first great theme of the Bible—Creation.

Second, there has been a covenant between God and man. The nature of God is all powerful and absolute good. If the nature of God is only one of these, it would not be the God we believe in. God should be all powerful, but also absolute good. If a parent is a good person, but has no power at all, has no ability at all, then the parent can't be a good parent. On the other hand, if a parent has a lot of ability, strength and health, but is not responsible and does not love the children, that parent is also not a good parent. God is all powerful and absolute good. So, God controls the world according to God's will. Because God is good, God made a covenant with us.

What is a covenant? It's a contract, a binding agreement, a pledge, a promise, a pact. The biblical covenant is the binding agreement God makes with us. "I will be your God and you shall be my people." To understand the covenant better, we need to put in two extra words. God says, "I will be your only God, and you shall be my servant people." The Bible is the book of the promise. The Old Testament is the old promise of God, the Old covenant with God. The New Testament is the new promise of God, the New Covenant.

The first covenant with God and man is the covenant of the rainbow. For forty days and nights it rained, and the rain cast away all living things except Noah's family. God destroyed and judged according to His good will. And then, He promised that He will no longer judge people through water and gave us a rainbow as a sign of promise.

The second covenant with God and God's people was the Ten Commandments. The first four Commandments define the first phrase of the covenant, "I will be your only God." But, even with the Ten Commandments in hand, the people still didn't get it. They kept on breaking the covenant. So next, God sent the prophets, who tried in all kinds of dramatic ways to call the people back to covenant faith.

God gave the covenant personally to Abraham: "I will be your only God and you shall be my servant people." On many occasions, devoted people made their covenant with God. Jacob made a covenant with God when he heard the voice of the Lord, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendents the land on which you are lying." Then, Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. And then, Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey... this

stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

The Old Testament stories tell us that our faith is not enough these two truths: Creation and Covenant. The Jewish faith also affirms these truths. Christian faith, however, rest not only on these two truths, but goes on to search for further truth, namely, the ultimate truth of Christ, the third "C" for today. The center of universal human history is Christ. Christ is point of transition from Jewish faith to Christian faith.

Let me mention two verses of Scripture that embody the impact of Christ on this world. The first verse is in the prologue to John's Gospel: "The word became flesh and lived among us... full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) This means that Jesus Christ was the covenant wrapped up in one person, the covenant lived out before us.

The other verse that sums up the work of Christ in the world comes from the apostle Paul. Paul said this: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself." (II Cor. 5:19)

Christ is the turning point of history, from B.C. to A.D. Christ is the turning point from the sinner to the righteous. Christ is the turning point from the slavery of world to the freedom for the new life.

In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself.

Fourth, the Church is the agent which takes over the task of delivering the work of the Christ our Lord in the world until His second coming. The task of the church is to continue the preaching, teaching, healing, and caring ministry of Jesus Christ. You and I were called to take over the tasks of the Lord. That's the way we evaluate ourselves as a church. How well are we continuing his ministry of love? Jesus went to the cross. He came out of the tomb. He passed the torch to us, and then he ascended into heaven. However, he didn't leave us alone. He sent the Holy Spirit to empower us and to work through us.

A police officer found a little boy sitting on the curb in the downtown section of a big city. The little boy was crying because he was lost. The officer said, "Don't worry. I'll help you! Glance around and see if you can see anything that looks familiar." The boy looked around for a few moments, and then suddenly his face brightened because off in the distance he could see a church. It had a tall steeple with a cross on top. The little boy said, "There! Look! If you can get me to the cross, we can find way home!" That says it all doesn't it?

The church is the symbol of Faith, of Hope and of Love to the world. The church is the tower of light which shines to the lost to find the way. From cover to cover, from Genesis to Revelation, God is recognized as "the Great Deliverer." God delivered Noah from the fury of the flood, and the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, and Daniel from the lion's den. But the without question, the greatest delivery was what God did for us "on an

old rugged cross,” through the gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, our Deliverer. The church is the agent of the God's delivery.

Lastly, there is the promise that at the end of world, there will be new beginning, and in between the two is the turning point, Culmination.

The last book of the Bible is the book of Revelation. Revelations is notoriously the most difficult book in the New Testament. It is the vision that John, one of Christ's Apostles, received about the Kingdom of heaven and foretold for the followers of Christ.

Apostle John told us what he saw in the world to come. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Apostle Paul said, “For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins.” Paul continued, saying, “Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”

Christians are believers of the coming of the final triumph of righteousness and life everlasting.

When you have lost your way, read the map, the Bible, and you will find your way again. When you have found the way, keep the way and follow the way which leads to the top of mountain, culmination. You and I are mountain climbers of Christian truth. When we climb and climb, and then we will reach the top of mountain. And on top of the mountain we will see the sight of the new horizon, the promised land over the mountain.

Those who climbed on top of the mountain of truth, and saw the sight of the new horizon shall be called the triumpher who conquered the world of the darkness.

When all else fails, read the Bible and remember the five great recurring themes in the Scriptures: Creation, Covenant, Christ, Church and Culmination.

The Bible is the only way to trust as our guide, our map to follow in truth for our way through life. And the Lord, is the way, the truth, and the life of eternal.