

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church Reading Together

The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

Jesus is the “Golden Thread” that runs through the whole Bible from start to finish. He is truly the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13). I hope you will enjoy the journey we take together. Don’t make it a duty, let it be a delight. Don’t be depressed or discouraged if you get behind—there is always tomorrow. You may want to keep a notebook to write down your thoughts and impressions as you read each day. What is the Holy Spirit showing you from your reading—about God, about Jesus, and about yourself? What can you learn from what you read? How can you pray so that what you have learned impacts the way you think and live?

It has been said that one of the best ways to read the Bible is to read it as an unfolding story with Jesus as the main character and the hero of the story. If we look at the Bible this way, we see that the first two chapters of the Bible, Genesis 1 and 2, serve as an introduction or prologue to the story. They present the ideal world that God created to glorify him, and the last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, serve as the conclusion of the story or the epilogue. In between all of those chapters, starting in Genesis 3 and ending in Revelation 20, is the story of Jesus. Let’s explore it together.

January 1st—John 1: 1 – 14

Genesis 1:1-3 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

Before we begin at the beginning, we have to understand what happened before the beginning. With minds that are so bound by time, it is hard for us to understand concepts like eternity where there is no beginning and there is no end. Modern science discounts God, because there is no explanation for how God came into being. To the modern scientific mind everything must have an explanation, everything must have a beginning. Since the God of the Bible has no explanation for his beginning, in their minds, he can’t possibly exist. The funny thing

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

is they have no explanation for how the Big Bang happened that caused our world to come into being; they have no explanation for where all of the chemicals and elements came from that are the building blocks for the world we live in. Do you see a contradiction in their thinking? Don't let anyone tell you that creation without God at the center of it is a proven fact, because it isn't. I believe it takes more faith to believe in accidental creation (Big Bang and evolution) then it does to believe in an eternal God who created all things (for more information on what is going on in the scientific community today watch the movie *Expelled* by Ben Stein).

One of the reasons that modern scientists reject God is because, in their minds, a God who would be great enough to create all of the galaxies in the universe could never care about humanity in a personal way like the God of the Bible clearly does. A God so great could never be so caring. I think that is because their view of God is formed by their view of humanity. The greater humans are the less they seem to care about others. But is God really like us? If he is like us what kind of a God does that make him? Here, in John 1, we see a God who is great enough to create all things.

John 1:1-4 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

But we also see a God who loves us so much that after we sinned and rebelled against him, he was willing to come and enter our world.

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

It is clear from verse 14 that the Word that is referred to throughout this passage is Jesus. He was there at the beginning with God when everything was created, and he is God made flesh, who came and

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

made his dwelling with us so that even after our sin and rebellion, which made us children of Satan, we would once again have the right to be called Sons of God.

John 1:12-13 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

Jesus the creator of mankind is also Jesus the redeemer of mankind.

January 2 – Genesis 1: 3 – 27

As you read this very familiar account of the creation of our world by the hand of God, think about these things. Think about the orderliness and care of how God went about creating everything. Think about the intricacies of creation. Take a moment and look at your hand, and think about how complex just your hand is. Think of all of the nerves and muscles that have to work together to make your hand open and close. Do you really think that just accidentally happened by chance? Look at the beauty and variety in creation and marvel at what God has done, and then think about these things: God made it all from nothing.

Hebrews 11:3 *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”* God made it all so that we would know that there is a God and we should seek him with all of our hearts.

Psalms 19:1-4 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. ³ There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.*

You don't ask a God this great to just come and be a consultant for your life or a spiritual advisor—a God this great has to be worshipped and has to be the center of our entire being and entire existence.

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

Romans 1:20-22 “[That] *since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.* ²¹ *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.* ²² *Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.”*

Do you know God? Is God the center of your existence? There is enough evidence in creation to know there is a God who is worthy of our worship. But God didn't stop with that. God also gave us His Son, so that we might really know him.

Hebrews 1:1-3 “*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,* ² *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.* ³ *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”*

John 14:7 *If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”*

Do you understand what Jesus is saying to us? If we see him, if we know him, we will also know God. Jesus is the revealer of God to us.

January 3 – Colossians 1: 15 – 17

As Paul writes these words, he makes some bold and wonderful statements about who Jesus is and what Jesus does. The “He” that Paul refers to in these verses is Jesus. Jesus is the image of the invisible God who reveals God to us—he is God made flesh. Be careful as you read the phrase, “firstborn over all creation,” in verse 15. Read this exactly as Paul meant it to be read. Paul is not saying that Jesus is

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

a created being, because in the very next verse, Paul tells us that Jesus is the creator of all things. Paul tells us in:

Philippians 2:6-11 that Jesus, *"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

This is what Paul means when he talks about Jesus being the firstborn. The phrase firstborn ties directly into Jesus' resurrection from the grave. He was the first one who was resurrected to eternal life. The phrase firstborn had a very significant meaning in the world Paul lived in. The firstborn son managed all aspects of the family for the father. Everyone, except for the father, had to answer to the firstborn son. Paul uses the phrase firstborn to illustrate Jesus' place as ruler of all things.

Now consider everything else Paul tells us about Jesus in the rest of Colossians 1: 15 – 17. In verse 16, Paul acknowledges Jesus as being the creator of all things, even the very things that conspired together to have Jesus put to death (the rulers and authorities of this world). How amazing is it that Jesus would create the very powers that would one day put him to death? As you think about this, think about the conversation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate that is recorded in:

John 19:10-11 *"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" ¹¹ Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.*

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

Think how amazing it is that Jesus gave Pilate the power to put him to death. Jesus willingly orchestrated all of the events that lead him to the cross, and he did it all for our sake!

Paul goes on in Colossians 1: 17 to tell us that Jesus is eternal (coming before everything), and Jesus is the one who holds all things together. Jesus not only orchestrated all of the events of his life, including going to the cross, he also orchestrates all the events of our lives. Whatever we are going through today is because Jesus is allowing it. Will you trust him? Will you be thankful, even if you don't like what he has brought into your life? Will you trust him, because you know how much he loves you?

January 4 – Genesis 1: 27 – 31

As we read these verses from Genesis 1 we see that God created Adam and Eve in his image and then we hear God give a mandate to Adam and Eve. It is a mandate to take the image of God that is in them and to go and fill the whole earth with that image. Throughout history, kings have built monuments to themselves to remind the people they rule that they have a king. In the same way, as Adam and Eve multiply and make new image bearers of God and those image bearers fill the earth, all of creation will be reminded of God's rule and authority over it. In the next few days we will look at Adam and Eve's sin and how that changed so much about the world we live in, but understand this, the mandate that Adam and Eve were given didn't change even after they sinned. God expelled them from the Garden, but He didn't take back the mandate to go and make image bearers, to fill the earth and rule over it. The mandate was still there; they were just incapable of carrying it out because sin had marred the image of God that they carried.

But Jesus changes everything, and allows us to once again be able to carry out that mandate. We have already seen from Colossians 1: 15 that Christ is the image of the invisible God. Now, we must couple that thought with this thought from the Apostle Paul:

**Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together**

The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

2 Corinthians 3:18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.*

As followers of Christ, we are being remade into his likeness, which means we are being remade into the image of God that was marred by Adam and Eve's sin. Jesus tells us in:

Matthew 28:19-20 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

Do you see the connection? As followers of Christ we are to bear the image of Christ and take it to the whole world. It is the same mandate Adam and Eve had—to fill the earth with the image of God. Just as Adam and Eve had a God-given mission, so do we. Will we let sin stand in our way, or will we move forward boldly in the name of Jesus?

January 5 – Genesis 2: 15 – 25

In today's reading, we read the beautiful story of how woman was created and marriage was ordained by God. As you read these verses, we see that Eve was created by God to complete Adam—to be a helper to Adam, so that Adam could carry out his God-given responsibilities. In today's world this whole idea is frowned upon by our modern thinking. In our society, the beauty of a woman being a helper to a man is lost, because to our modern way of thinking this role, which has been given to women by God, seems to be demeaning to them. Nothing could be further from the truth. In marriage—in the roles of husband and wife—we see a beautiful picture of Christ and his church.

Ephesians 5:23-27 *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy,*

**Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together**

The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Think about what Paul is writing in these verses. Marriage is a picture of Christ and his church. The husband's role is to be like Jesus. What does that mean? Look how Paul describes the husband's role in these verses. Yes, Paul says the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, but the husband is to be willing to die to himself for the good of his wife, just as Christ died for his church. Now what is the role of the wife? It is the same as the church. What does the church do for Jesus? It serves him by carrying out the work that he has given it to do. The church is the helper to Jesus. One of the things we have to decide as we read the Bible is this: Is it really God's Word? I believe it is, and even though I may not like everything I read in it (at least at first glance), I must wrestle with it and accept its truth, because it is God's Word. Before you hastily reject what the Bible has to say consider this. How sad is it when a husband abuses his wife? How sad is it when a wife dominates her husband? We know both of these extremes are wrong, so now we have to figure out what is right. How beautiful would our marriages look if we could learn to carry out our God-given roles and be a picture of Christ and his church to the world around us?

January 6 – Genesis 2: 2 – 3

Rest. It is what we all need, but we just can't seem to get enough of it. It is ultimately what was lost when Adam and Eve sinned. Once sin entered the world there was no more rest, only restlessness. It is not that sin brought work into the world, Genesis 2:15 tells us that God put Adam in the Garden to work and to care for it.

Genesis 2:15 *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

Work was part of what we were created to do, so work is not part of the curse of sin, nor is it the reason we don't find rest. Our rest is found in our relationship with God, and when we sinned that relationship and that rest was lost. But Jesus came so that once again we could find rest.

Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

The rest Jesus is talking about in these verses isn't the kind of rest you get when you put your feet up in your Lazy Boy, it's real rest that comes as a result of knowing that Jesus has done everything we couldn't do and everything we need to do so that we can be declared righteous in God's sight, and once again have a full relationship with God. No matter how hard we try, because of sin, we can never live lives that will please God. Everything we do is tainted by the sin that lives in us. That is why we need Jesus in order to find rest for our souls. Jesus fulfilled all of the law perfectly and then died as the perfect sacrifice for our sin. By placing our faith in Christ our sins are forgiven, and we also receive Christ's record of perfect righteousness as our record. We can rest in that record, because it is perfect. It is the forgiveness and righteousness that we have in Christ that allows us to once again find rest in a right relationship with God. Are you resting in the righteousness of Christ alone?

January 7 – Genesis 3: 1 – 13

These verses contain the tragic tale of Adam and Eve's fall into sin—a fall that also placed us under the curse of sin. Adam and Eve represented all of humanity, so when they became guilty of sin we also became guilty of sin. We all fell under the curse of sin.

Romans 5:12 *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned*

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

Sometimes we like to flatter ourselves, and in our pride we believe that if we had been Adam or if we had been Eve we would have not fallen like they fell. That is a lie. We would have fallen in just the same way. Because of the fall, we are sinful from birth.

Psalm 51:5 *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

But we are not without hope. Paul tells us in

Romans 5:6-17 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!....¹⁵ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!...¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Just as sin entered the world through one man, Adam, righteousness enters the world through one man, Christ. So, we have a choice. Do we want to live under the old way, under the curse of sin, and have Adam as our representative, or do we want to live under a new way, no longer under the curse of sin, but rather under the blessing of righteousness with Christ as our representative? As Joshua 24:15 says, "choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." Will you continue

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

to live under Adam and the curse, or will you by faith come and live under the blessing of Christ's righteousness?

January 8 – Genesis 3:14 – 15

After Adam and Eve sinned God showed up in the Garden and dealt with their sin. Because of sin a curse fell on all of creation. In these verses God starts by dealing with the serpent, Satan, and placing a curse on him. Verse 15 contains the first words of prophecy about Jesus that are found in the Bible. As part of Satan's curse, God tells Satan that there will be hatred between Satan's offspring and the offspring of the woman. Satan's offspring are all those who choose to remain in rebellion against God.

1 John 3:10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God

To see how this is true consider these words that Jesus spoke to the Pharisees as they stood in opposition to Jesus and plotted to kill him:

John 8:44 *You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

The offspring of the woman that God is referring to here in Genesis 3:15 is Jesus. The whole point of Jesus being born of the Virgin Mary, but conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit was so that he could become flesh and blood like we are, but without our sinful natures. In Genesis 3:15, God clearly establishes the fact that there will be continual warfare between the kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of Heaven. The kingdom of Satan will strike the heel of the Kingdom of Heaven. The kingdom of Satan will inflict a wound on the offspring of the woman. That is a picture of Jesus going to the cross. He was wounded for our transgressions (Isaiah 53: 5), and when Jesus went to the cross Satan

**Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together**

The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

believed he had won, but when Jesus rose from the grave, he triumphed over Satan, and the head of Satan was crushed. It's as if the death sentence has been pronounced but has not yet been carried out. Revelation 19 and 20 tells us about that day.

There is no middle ground in this conflict—either we are children of Satan or we are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.