

Lectionary Based Preaching
(From the Revised Common Lectionary)

From
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"Lectionary"

A collection of readings or selections from the Scriptures, arranged and intended for proclamation during the worship of the People of God.

Historical Background

Used in Fourth Century.

Follows the calendar of the church year

Usually involves a continuous reading of texts.

Added feast days and special days of the church calendar interfered with the simplicity of the continuous reading, requiring the revision of the lectionary.

Contemporary Background

Consultation on Common Texts

Began in 1960's and includes: Anglican church of Canada, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Reformed church, The Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America and Canada, Free Methodists of Canada, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Polish National Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church U.S.A., Presbyterian Church in Canada, Reformed Church in America, Roman Catholic Church in U.S. and Canada, Unitarian/Universalist, United Church of Canada, United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church.

The result, a common document introduced around 1983, was called *The Revised Common Lectionary*.

After feedback, it was revised in 1995.

In theory it can be continually be revised.

Two Forms of Lectionaries:

A simple table of readings based on liturgical day and date, and the scripture references of the text to be proclaimed.

Example given out.

A full text edition, which reprints entire texts from a particular translation of the Bible.

Three year Cycle

Year A – Matthew

Year B – Mark

Year C – Luke

Year A always begins on the first Sunday in Advent in years which can be evenly divided by three (1998).

Typical Usage in Formal Liturgy

Collect or Prayer for Illumination

First Reading

Psalter—usually read responsively or sung

Second Reading (epistle)

Gradual Hymn

Gospel Reading

Sermon

The Gospel Reading is the "key" reading for the day. Other readings are related to or complementary to the Gospel Reading.

Old Testament Readings

From Advent 1 to Trinity Sunday the Old Testament reading is closely related to the gospel reading for the day.

During Ordinary time (beginning after Trinity Sunday until Christ the King) provision has been made for two patterns of reading from the Old Testament.

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Gospel Reading -> First reading

Deuterocanonical Readings

In places where a reading from deuterocanonical books is listed, and alternate reading from canonical scripture has also been provided.

First Readings

Usually Old Testament passages.

During Easter the first readings are taken from the book of Acts.

The Psalm

The psalm is provided as a response to the first reading. It is not intended as another reading

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Gospel Reading -> First reading -> Psalm

Second Readings

Taken from the Epistles.

Second Readings involve a semi-continuous reading from particular epistles within a particular liturgical season.

Balanced over a three-year period.

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Gospel -> {First reading and Epistle} -> Psalm

Decisions for Preaching

Discerning the common connection with the gospel reading.

Lectio Continua preaching.

Determine the limits of the pericope of scripture.

Use of psalm in relation to preaching.

Pros...according to Allen

Represent the fullness of the gospel with its dual motifs of God's love and justice.

Helps the congregation systematically encounter theological themes and texts that are foundational to faith.

Helps the congregation remember Christian identity and vocation.

Broadens the range of theological themes and biblical texts that most pastors and congregations would consider.

Gives a weekly opportunity for congregations to hear the first testament.

Brings pastor and people together with difficult texts they would otherwise avoid.

Helps form the church as a community.

Symbolizes unity and connectionalism.

Gives the preacher a place to start sermon preparation.
(See "Aside" below)

Has numerous resources available for preaching and teaching.

Facilitates planning for worship and preaching.
Preacher can use these to prepare a year in advance.

People can also prepare (musicians, congregants).

Combines *lectio selectra* and *lectio continua*.

Fosters weekly observances of word and sacrament.

Series Preaching—*An Aside*

Some preachers are using series in substitution for lectionary. This presupposes the needs of the people instead of the body of scripture.

Cons...according to Allen

Less texts stress justice than love.
Love of God gets over emphasized.

Does not cover all theological motifs fully or equally.
e.g. relationship between earth and creatures.

Relationships between texts and particular days and seasons is not always clear.

Preachers can still ride hobbyhorse through selection of texts.

The first testament is disadvantaged in most lectionaries.

Many challenging texts are missing from the lectionary.
e.g. violence and dishonor to women.

Readings do not always fit the immediate context of the congregation.

The use of the lectionary may highlight the divisions that remain within the church.

Some of the beginning and ending points of lessons are not satisfactory.

Preachers may be tempted to use lectionary resources as quick fixes, rather than engaging the texts seriously.

"The lectionary is a servant of witness, not its master. A preacher should feel the freedom to depart from the lectionary as needed." Ron Allen

Lectionary can be a first option but need not be the final authority.

Wrap up comments

Lectionary is a resource that emphasizes the text first. It puts scripture to the forefront.