



GROUPS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Series: At Commons - Part 2 September 17, 2023

Scripture: Matt 7:9-11, Lk 4:18-20, Isaiah 63:2-3a

*Community is shaped by the conversations we share.
These questions are just a tool to help you meaningfully engage with
the themes of this week's teaching.*

Message Summary: Last week we talked about the words and the Word and how important it is to keep Jesus at the centre of our imagination. Our question for today though is how that conviction shapes how we read the Bible. Our second affirmation at Commons is this: *The scriptures lead us to the realization that Jesus is the only exact representation of the divine and that God has always looked like Jesus even when we didn't see that clearly.*

With Jesus being our north star for navigating the Bible, we will look at three examples of reading the Bible through Jesus.

- **Permission to feel (Matt 7:9-11)** We're often taught to distrust our feelings, but in Matt 7:9-11, Jesus actually uses our goodness as a launching point to explain God's. By employing the "how much more" rhetoric device, Jesus tells us that we can trust our senses, and our feelings are an important part of our dialogue with God.
- **The Benefits of Omission (Lk 4:18-20)** Jesus models that kind of scripture engagement for us in Lk 4: 18-20, when he reframes

the passage from the prophet Isaiah 61: 1-3 in light of his presence in the world, but also omits the part that talks about the day of the Lord's vengeance. The idea behind divine vengeance in Isaiah is that it has a redemptive bent, where God deals with everything that harms us in order for the years of divine favour to flow, but over time people started to see divine vengeance and retribution as similar to human vengeance (tHebrew has two different words for those two types of vengeance).

- **The Reinterpretation (Isa 63:2-3a & Rev 19:13-16)** The Scripture and the church also reinterpret themselves by looking back at the story of Jesus. In Rev 19, we see the Divine Warrior (The Word of God) riding in robe drenched with blood and with a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth. The image of the divine warrior comes from Isa 63. So, John connects the omission of vengeance from Isa 61 by Jesus and reinterprets Isa 63:2-3a in light of Jesus. The blood drenched clothes is the image of the cross, God would rather die than kill. The vengeance of God was never against people, but against everything that harms people.
 - **Practical Implications of it all** The Bible is not an idol, but can become one, and if we're not careful to centre Jesus in our reading of the Bible, we might end up remaking God in our own image.
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Connect: How was your week (or summer if you're meeting for the first time this season)? What are some of the things that are on the front burner for you right now or this fall, and what's on the back burner?

Share: What role do your feelings play in your engagement with Scripture? Do you tend to trust your sense of what's right and wrong or do you tend to doubt yourself? How does this idea that Jeremy shared "even in our brokenness, even though you are evil as Jesus says, you still know good when you see it, and you can and do demonstrate love in your life; and not only that, your love can be a model for you to understand the unbounded love of God" play out in your life?

Reflect on the description of the gospel that Jesus gives in Lk 4:18-21. There's a lot of tangible goodness there that then gets expanded by Jesus even more. What does the Gospel, the good news, include for you? Why do you think Jesus omits the part about God's vengeance? How does that omission make you feel?

Engage: with the image of the Divine Warrior in Rev 19:13-16 and Isa 63: 2-3a. How did the church (here John and his community) reinterpret their words about God in light of the Word of God? Why do you think it is sometimes hard for us to reconcile our ideas of vengeance and retribution with the image of non-violent Jesus who would rather die than kill and whose "weapons" are his words and righteousness?

Take away: What do you think about Jeremy's first point (about our biased reading of the bible being a good thing, and with the scriptures pointing us to Jesus and then Jesus taking us back to the

scriptures) and the final point in the sermon quoted below? How do these ideas resonate with you?

"But as Christians this is the most practical application of our faith possible. Because if you and I aren't careful, if we don't constantly recenter Jesus in our reading of scripture, if we don't teach ourselves to constantly interpret and reinterpret it in the light of his way demonstrated in the world, then we will slowly find the scriptures that allow us to remake God in our own image - violent and fearful, content with the status quo, consumed with profit, concerned with ourselves and our own over the foreigner and the stranger."

Pray:

*God who is alive and active,
In us and near us,
Who continues to guide, and mould, and shape us into the people
you imagine us to become,
Might we never become satisfied with dry and dusty religion,
Movements and traditions and liturgies for their own sake,
But instead might we come to embrace those same patterns for
how they can point us to you,
Your heart,
Your love,
Your grace and peace embodied in the world.*

*Might our rhythms of worship create ripples of grace in our lives
And might that slowly begin to change the context in which we live:
More compassion for ourselves
More understanding for our neighbour
More welcome for the stranger.
If we find ourselves here today — weighed down and heavy —
Might your presence here lift us into new places
With new possibilities for generous love.
In the strong name of the risen Christ we pray,
Amen*