

Lectio Continua

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One of the most important things the ministers and congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) could do would be to work together to provide for reading and preaching through the Bible, book by book, chapter by chapter, and verse by verse. This method is known as *lectio continua*, preaching through the scripture in order, without omitting sections.

This history and importance of this systematic and comprehensive approach to proclaiming and hearing the word of God is well set forth by Hughes Oliphant Old in *Worship Reformed according to Scripture*, revised and expanded edition, Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, in Chapter 5, "The Ministry of the Word," pp. 59-90. For a fuller treatment, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, seven volumes, Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998 ff., of which volumes one through four are in print, volume five is at the printer, and volumes six and seven are forthcoming.

As an aid to getting started on this adventure in preaching, let me suggest the following divisions of the texts of the Gospels, Acts, and Romans. You, of course, may want to rework this entirely, into shorter or longer readings. That is fine. For those who are interested, I could also suggest Old Testament readings to pair with these and, at least in some cases, Psalms and even hymn selections. But the first and most important thing is to start preaching the Bible by *lectio continua*.

Preaching through Matthew

1. Matthew 1:1-17 "By the Grace of God"
2. Matthew 1:18-25 "He Will Save His People!"
3. Matthew 2:1-12 "For All the World"
4. Matthew 2:13-23 "The Son of God"
5. Matthew 3:1-12 "The Kingdom of Heaven Is at Hand"
6. Matthew 3:13-17 "This Is My Beloved Son"
7. Matthew 4:1-11 "Worship the Lord Your God"
8. Matthew 4:12-25 "Follow Me!"
9. Matthew 5:1-12 "Blessed Are You!"
10. Matthew 5:13-32 "Set on a Hill!"

11. Matthew 5:33-48 "Love Your Enemies!"
12. Matthew 6:1-18 "Forgive Us Our Debts"
13. Matthew 6:19-34 "Treasures in Heaven"
14. Matthew 7:1-12 "Ask, Seek, Knock!"
15. Matthew 7:13-29 "When the Rain Falls"
16. Matthew 8:1-17 "He Bore Our Diseases!"
17. Matthew 8:18-34 "Through the Storms"
18. Matthew 9:1-17 "Follow Me!"
19. Matthew 9:18-38 "Lord of the Harvest"
20. Matthew 10:1-25 "Endure to the End!"
21. Matthew 10:26-42 "Do Not Fear"
22. Matthew 11:1-19 "Go and Tell"
23. Matthew 11:20-30 "Rest for Your Souls"
24. Matthew 12:1-14 "I Desire Mercy"
25. Matthew 12:15-37 "By the Spirit of God!"
26. Matthew 12:38-50 "Whoever Does the Will of God"
27. Matthew 13:1-23 "Beware the Cares of the World!"
28. Matthew 13:24-35 "The Hidden Kingdom"
29. Matthew 13:36-58 "So It Will Be"
30. Matthew 14:1-21 "The Bread of Life"
31. Matthew 14:22-36 "Take Heart!"
32. Matthew 15:1-20 "Where Is Your Heart?"
33. Matthew 15:21-39 "Great Is Your Faith!"

34. Matthew 16:1-12 "Beware!"
35. Matthew 16:13-28 "You Are the Christ!"
36. Matthew 17:1-13 "Listen to Him!"
37. Matthew 17:14-27 "Moving Mountains!"
38. Matthew 18:1-20 "Gathered in His Name!"
39. Matthew 18:21-35 "From Your Heart!"
40. Matthew 19:1-15 "The Faithfulness of God!"
41. Matthew 19:16-30 "Come, Follow Me!"
42. Matthew 20:1-16 "The Last Will Be First!"
43. Matthew 20:17-34 "Not to Be Served But to Serve!"
44. Matthew 21:1-17 "In the Name of the Lord!"
45. Matthew 21:18-32 "Doing the Will of God!"
46. Matthew 21:33-46 "Christ the Cornerstone!"
47. Matthew 22:1-14 "Invite as Many as You Find!"
48. Matthew 22:15-33 "The Thing's That Are God's!"
49. Matthew 22:34-46 "Love the Lord Your God!"
50. Matthew 23:1-22 "One Father!"
51. Matthew 23:23-39 "I Would Have Gathered You!"
52. Matthew 24:1-28 "Throughout the Whole World!"
53. Matthew 24:29-51 "Be Ready!"
54. Matthew 25:1-13 "Neither the Day nor the Hour!"
55. Matthew 25:14-30 "The Joy of the Master"
56. Matthew 25:31-46 "As to the Least of These"

57. Matthew 26:1-16 "Delivered Up"
58. Matthew 26:17-29 "Eleven Called Him Lord"
59. Matthew 26:30-46 "Thy Will Be Done"
60. Matthew 26:47-56 "It Must Be So"
61. Matthew 26:57-75 "You Are the Christ"
62. Matthew 27:1-10 "Innocent Blood"
63. Matthew 27:11-26 "Without Sin"
64. Matthew 27:27-44 "He Trusts in God"
65. Matthew 27:45-54 "The Son of God!"
66. Matthew 27:55-66 "Guarding the Tomb"
67. Matthew 28:1-10 "He Has Risen!"
68. Matthew 28:11-20 "I Am with You Always!"

Preaching through Mark

1. Mark 1:1-15 "The Beginning of the Gospel"
2. Mark 1:16-31 "Fishers of Men"
3. Mark 1:32-45 "Let's Go!"
4. Mark 2:1-12 "Your Sins Are Forgiven!"
5. Mark 2:13-22 "Follow Me!"
6. Mark 2:23-3:6 "Do Good, Save Life!"
7. Mark 3:7-19 "To Be with Him"
8. Mark 3:20-35 "Whoever Does the Will of God"
9. Mark 4:1-20 "What Harvest from Here?"

10. Mark 4:21-34 "The Kingdom of God"
11. Mark 4:35-41 "When the Storms Come"
12. Mark 5:1-20 "Life Beyond the Grave"
13. Mark 5:21-43 "Do Not Fear, Only Believe"
14. Mark 6:1-6a "How Shall We Respond?"
15. Mark 6:6b-13 "Two by Two"
16. Mark 6:14-29 "What Strange Gift?"
17. Mark 6:30-44 "The Compassion of Christ"
18. Mark 6:45-56 "The Peace of God"
19. Mark 7:1-23 "From the Heart!"
20. Mark 7:24-37 "Ears to Hear, Tongues to Speak"
21. Mark 8:1-21 "The Bread of Life"
22. Mark 8:22-9:1 "Who Do You Say That I Am?"
23. Mark 9:2-29 "Courage for Living"
24. Mark 9:30-50 "First and Last"
25. Mark 10:1-16 "Let the Children Come!"
26. Mark 10:17-31 "Come, Follow Me!"
27. Mark 10:32-45 "A Ransom for Many"
28. Mark 10:46-52 "Go Your Way!"
29. Mark 11:1-11 "Hosanna!"
30. Mark 11:12-26 "When You Pray, Forgive"
31. Mark 11:27-12:12 "Christ the Cornerstone!"
32. Mark 12:13-17 "The Things That Are God's"

33. Mark 12:18-27 "The Power of God"
34. Mark 12:28-34 "With All Your Heart!"
35. Mark 12:35-44 "Victory over Death"
36. Mark 13:1-37 "Stay Awake!"
37. Mark 14:1-11 "Anointed Beforehand!"
38. Mark 14:12-25 "This Is My Body"
39. Mark 14:26-52 "Not What I Will, But What You Will"
40. Mark 14:53-72 "Are You the Christ?"
41. Mark 15:1-20 "King of the Jews"
42. Mark 15:21-47 "The Son of God!"
43. Mark 16:1-8 "He Has Risen!"
44. Mark 16:9-20 "Go into All the World!"

Preaching through Luke

1. Luke 1:1-25 "A People Prepared for the Lord!"
2. Luke 1:26-38 "He Will Reign Forever!"
3. Luke 1:39-56 "Magnify the Lord!"
4. Luke 1:57-80 "A Mighty Savior"
5. Luke 2:1-20 "To You Is Born a Savior!"
6. Luke 2:21-40 "The Eyes of Faith"
7. Luke 2:41-52 "To Grow in the Favor of the Lord!"
8. Luke 3:1-20 "Prepare the Way of the Lord!"
9. Luke 3:21-38 "Our Roots Run Deep!"

10. Luke 4:1-13 "Victory over Temptation"
11. Luke 4:14-30 "Good News"
12. Luke 4:31-44 "The Purpose of Our Lives"
13. Luke 5:1-11 "In Deep Water"
14. Luke 5:12-26 "Healing the Hidden Wound"
15. Luke 5:27-39 "Christ Is Calling Us"
16. Luke 6:1-11 "Doing Good and Saving Life"
17. Luke 6:12-26 "Called, Chosen, Named"
18. Luke 6:27-49 "Come, Hear, and Act!"
19. Luke 7:1-17 "More Powerful than Death"
20. Luke 7:18-35 "Go and Tell What You Have Seen and Heard"
21. Luke 7:36-50 "The Joy of Forgiveness"
22. Luke 8:1-21 "Hear the Word, Hold It Fast, and Bear Fruit"
23. Luke 8:22-39 "Fear or Faith?"
24. Luke 8:40-56 "Do Not Fear, Only Believe"
25. Luke 9:1-17 "Called, Gifted, Sent"
26. Luke 9:18-27 "Who Do You Say That I Am?"
27. Luke 9:28-50 "Listen to Him"
28. Luke 9:51-62 "No One Who Looks Back Is Fit"
29. Luke 10:1-24 "Whoever Listens to You Listens to Me!"
30. Luke 10:25-42 "The Good Samaritan"
31. Luke 11:1-13 "The Lord's Prayer"
32. Luke 11:14-36 "Hear the Word of God and Obey It!"

33. Luke 11:37-54 "Justice and the Love of God"
34. Luke 12:1-34 "Do Not Fear, Do Not Be Afraid!"
35. Luke 12:35-59 "The Son of Man Is Coming"
36. Luke 13:1-17 "One More Year"
37. Luke 13:18-35 "From East and West, from North and South"
38. Luke 14:1-24 "So That My House May Be Filled"
39. Luke 14:25-35 "All Your Possessions"
40. Luke 15:1-32 "Lost and Found"
41. Luke 16:1-18 "God and Wealth"
42. Luke 16:19-31 "The Time Is Now!"
43. Luke 17:1-19 "Increase Our Faith!"
44. Luke 17:20-37 "The Kingdom of God"
45. Luke 18:1-14 "Pray Always!"
46. Luke 18:15-30 "Receive the Kingdom!"
47. Luke 18:31-43 "To See What the Blind Man Saw!"
48. Luke 19:1-28 "No Greater Power!"
49. Luke 19:29-48 "The Humble King!"
50. Luke 20:1-26 "Christ Is Our Cornerstone"
51. Luke 20:27-47 "Children of the Resurrection"
52. Luke 21:1-19 "Signs of the Times?"
53. Luke 21:20-38 "Be Alert at All Times!"
54. Luke 22:1-38 "In Remembrance"
55. Luke 22:39-53 "Not My Will but Yours Be Done"

56.Luke 22:54-71 "The Misery and the Majesty"

57.Luke 23:1-25 "Innocent, but Crucified"

58.Luke 23:26-56 "Crucified, Dead, and Buried"

59.Luke 24:1-12 "Christ Has Risen!"

60.Luke 24:13-35 "The Lord Is Risen Indeed!"

61.Luke 24:36-53 "You Are Witnesses!"

Preaching through John

1.John 1:1-18 "The Word Became Flesh!"

2.John 1:19-34 "The Lamb of God!"

3.John 1:35-51 "Come and See!"

4.John 2:1-12 "Glory Revealed!"

5.John 2:13-25 "Zeal for the House of the Lord!"

6.John 3:1-21 "For God So Loved the World!"

7.John 3:22-36 "All Are Going to Him!"

8.John 4:1-42 "Worship in Spirit and Truth!"

9.John 4:43-54 "How Shall We Believe?"

10.John 5:1-18 "Do You Want to Be Made Well?"

11.John 5:19-47 "As the Father, So the Son"

12.John 6:1-21 "The One Who Is to Come"

13.John 6:22-40 "The Bread of Life"

14.John 6:41-71 "Whom Shall We Serve?"

15.John 7:1-24 "To Do the Will of God"

16. John 7:25-52 "Come to Me"
17. John 7:53-8:11 "Go and Do Not Sin Again"
18. John 8:12-59 "The Light of the World"
19. John 9:1-41 "One Thing I Know"
20. John 10:1-42 "The Good Shepherd"
21. John 11:1-54 "So That You May Believe"
22. John 11:55-12:19 "The World Has Gone After Him"
23. John 12:20-50 "Christ Draws Us to Himself!"
24. John 13:1-38 "As I Have Loved You!"
25. John 14:1-14 "The Way, the Truth, and the Life"
26. John 14:15-31 "Peace I Leave with You"
27. John 15:1-11 "Abide in Me"
28. John 15:12-27 "I Chose You!"
29. John 16:1-15 "The Spirit of Truth!"
30. John 16:16-33 "That Your Joy May Be Full!"
31. John 17:1-26 "That They May All Be One!"
32. John 18:1-27 "The Misery and the Majesty"
33. John 18:28-19:16 "Christ the King!"
34. John 19:17-42 "It Is Finished"
35. John 20:1-18 "The Lord Is Risen!"
36. John 20:19-31 "My Lord and My God!"
37. John 21:1-25 "Feed My Sheep!"

Preaching through Acts

1. Acts 1:1-14 "You Shall Be My Witnesses!"
2. Acts 1:15-26 "Witness to the Resurrection"
3. Acts 2:1-21 "The Name of the Lord!"
4. Acts 2:22-47 "Both Lord and Christ"
5. Acts 3:1-10 "Walk"
6. Acts 3:11-26 "Times of Refreshing"
7. Acts 4:1-22 "No Other Name"
8. Acts 4:23-31 "With All Boldness!"
9. Acts 4:32-5:11 "One Heart and Soul"
10. Acts 5:12-42 "Worthy to Suffer"
11. Acts 6:1-7 "The Word of God"
12. Acts 6:8-7:53 "The God of Glory"
13. Acts 7:54-8:3 "Receive My Spirit"
14. Acts 8:4-25 "Not for Sale!"
15. Acts 8:26-40 "The Good News of Jesus"
16. Acts 9:1-19a "A Chosen Instrument"
17. Acts 9:19b-31 "Though the Mountains Tremble"
18. Acts 9:32-43 "How Long, O LORD?"
19. Acts 10:1-11:18 "Every One Who Believes"
20. Acts 11:19-30 "The Grace of God"
21. Acts 12:1-25 "Violence and Glory"
22. Acts 13:1-12 "Confronting Evil"

23. Acts 13:13-52 "A Light for the Nations"
24. Acts 14:1-28 "A Door of Faith"
25. Acts 15:1-35 "Saved Through Grace"
26. Acts 15:36–16:10 "Come and Help Us"
27. Acts 16:11-40 "Believe in the Lord Jesus"
28. Acts 17:1-15 "Jesus Is the Christ"
29. Acts 17:16-34 "Seeking God"
30. Acts 18:1-28 "I Am with You"
31. Acts 19:1-20 "The Word Prevails"
32. Acts 19:21-41 "The Glory of God"
33. Acts 20:1-12 "Alive!"
34. Acts 20:13-38 "The Grace of God"
35. Acts 21:1-16 "For the Name of Jesus"
36. Acts 21:17-26 "What Is to Be Done?"
37. Acts 21:27–22:21 "Witness to All"
38. Acts 22:22–23:11 "Take Courage"
39. Acts 23:12-35 "Will We Hear?"
40. Acts 24:1-27 "Hope in God"
41. Acts 25:1-12 "Hidden Grace"
42. Acts 25:13–26:32 "On Trial for Hope"
43. Acts 27:1–28:10 "Take Heart!"
44. Acts 28:11-31 "Will *You* Listen?"

Preaching through Romans

1. Romans 1:1-13 "The Gospel of God"
2. Romans 1:14-23 "The Power of God"
3. Romans 1:24-32 "The Truth of God"
4. Romans 2:1-16 "The Judgment of God"
5. Romans 2:17-29 "The Honor of God"
6. Romans 3:1-8 "The Faithfulness of God"
7. Romans 3:9-20 "The Fear of God"
8. Romans 3:21-30 "The Righteousness of God"
9. Romans 3:31-4:12 "The Blessing of God"
10. Romans 4:13-22 "The Promise of God"
11. Romans 4:23-5:11 "The Peace of God"
12. Romans 5:12-21 "The Grace of God"
13. Romans 6:1-14 "The Glory of God"
14. Romans 6:15-23 "The Free Gift of God"
15. Romans 7:1-6 "The New Life of God"
16. Romans 7:7-25 "The Law of God"
17. Romans 8:1-11 "The Spirit of God"
18. Romans 8:12-17 "The Children of God"
19. Romans 8:18-30 "The Will of God"
20. Romans 8:31-39 "The Love of God"
21. Romans 9:1-13 "The Word of God"
22. Romans 9:14-29 "The Mercy of God"

23. Romans 9:30–10:13 "The Righteousness of God"
24. Romans 10:14-21 "The Good News of God"
25. Romans 11:1-12 "The Elect of God"
26. Romans 11:13-24 "The Kindness of God"
27. Romans 11:25-36 "The Calling of God"
28. Romans 12:1-2 "The Mercies of God"
29. Romans 12:3-13 "The Gifts of God"
30. Romans 12:14-21 "The Wrath of God"
31. Romans 13:1-7 "The Servant of God"
32. Romans 13:8-10 "The Love of God"
33. Romans 13:11-14 "The Christ of God"
34. Romans 14:1-12 "The Judgment Seat of God"
35. Romans 14:13-23 "The Kingdom of God"
36. Romans 15:1-13 "The Glory of God"
37. Romans 15:14-33 "The Spirit of God"
38. Romans 16:1-27 "The Command of God"

That should be enough for almost six years of Sundays! After that, we could move on to the rest of the epistles, though it would be better to preach those and the Old Testament books at Sunday evening services or weekday services. Given the amount of turnover in at least some of our congregations, it might be best for Sunday mornings to go through the gospels again.

Book by book, chapter by chapter, and verse by verse: this is the way to proclaim the word of God! This is the way to place ourselves under its authority. This is what we need to hear. This is the way toward life. Can we not dare to preach through the Bible using *lectio continua*?