

# OpenTheo

## Appreciating the BCP Lectionary (with Steven Wedgeworth and Clayton Hutchins)

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Steven Wedgeworth and Clayton Hutchins recently started the BCP Propers Podcast (<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-bcp-propers-podcast/id1697330171>). They join me to discuss the BCP lectionary and its value for preachers.

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## Transcript

Hello and welcome. I'm joined today by two good friends of mine, Steven Wedgeworth and Clayton Hutchins, and they have recently started a new podcast called the BCP Croppers Podcast. Thank you so much for joining me, Steven and Clayton.

Can you introduce yourselves briefly? Steven. Sure. My name is Steven Wedgeworth.

I am now the rector at Christ Church Anglican in South Bend, Indiana, but have been a pastor in Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the past and have known Alastair through the internet for many, many years. And Clayton. Hi, I'm Clayton.

I am the vicar of Holy Cross Anglican Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And yes, Steven and I both actually serve in the same diocese within the Anglican Church in North America. And our diocese is the Diocese of the Living Word.

Yeah, I live in Wisconsin. I've been here about a year. I pastored a bit before that.

And I know Alastair and Steven through their online writings and works. So I've enjoyed getting to know them and follow their work for some time now. And since Pentecost of this year, I've also become a member of the ACNA and same diocese.

So we're all in the same ecclesial location. Now, many people hearing the name of your podcast might puzzle about the meaning of the words within it. What does BCP mean? What does propers mean? Well, sure.

BCP, it's the Book of Common Prayer. So we're all Anglicans here now. And the Book of Common Prayer is historically the book that holds together Anglican worship and devotional life.

It includes the public liturgies that the church does, as well as prayers and occasional services. Proper, that has to do with the scripture readings that are assigned to a specific day. So they're proper to that day.

And specifically, they're proper to communion services and other holidays. So that's what our show is highlighting, reading the scriptures that are proper to those days. Can you maybe give a bit of a description of how this lectionary relates to other lectionaries? Why did you choose this lectionary as the one that would guide your project? Yeah, so the first answer to that is, it's a lectionary that Clayton and mine's churches actually are using.

So I like to joke, it's sermon prep ahead of Sunday. But it's also a revival or a resourcement project because Clayton and I both use the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which is the old standard in England, where you are, Alistair, and in other Commonwealth countries. But in the United States, it was discontinued after the War for Independence, and new prayer books were instituted.

Most Anglicans or Episcopalians in the United States have never used the 1662. And the places where the differences are going to be the most obvious, I think, is the lectionary. Newer books have adopted newer lectionaries.

And so probably if you're using the 1979 prayer book for the Episcopal Church or the 2019 for the ACNA, you're going to be following the revised Common Lectionary. So that's the same one that Lutherans and Catholics and others will be using. Before that, though, there were different versions.

So for us to cover the 1662 lectionary is to both serve our particular churches and also to help give more publicity and exposure to a lost artifact of Anglicanism. Could you say a bit more about what a lectionary is? What is the purpose that it's supposed to serve? And what are some of the varieties of lectionary available? Yeah, Clayton, why don't you say a few things? Sure. Well, I was going to say that my kind of draw to Anglicanism was

prompted by my reading through various Reformation liturgies that were in use from the time of the Protestant Reformation.

There's a collection of those in a book called Reformation Worship that I read in seminary, and that was really eye opening. It had things from the book of Common Prayer in there, but it also had Martin Bootser's liturgy in there, Zwingli, Calvin, a bunch of other guys and reformers, Luther. And I was just struck by how the reformers, first off, when it came to the Reformation, it wasn't just about reforming doctrine.

It was also about reforming worship. And in that effort, they weren't wanting to totally discard everything that the church had done or thought about up to that point, but to trim away things that were erroneous or unhelpful, keep things that were good and helpful. And I thought the book of Common Prayer, as Cranmer developed it and as it developed during the Reformation in England, was a really exemplary way of doing that.

So for me, that was the draw in the 1662 book of Common Prayers from that time period. That's the one that would have been officially settled upon and put in use in the Church of England and then consequently throughout the world, really. Global Anglicanism now is kind of looking to it as a rallying point.

The 39 articles, the 1662 book of Common Prayer, and even the book of Homilies. So we're seeing a lot of interest more broadly in the Anglican world globally and a kind of back to the sources. So yeah, I've really enjoyed getting to know this lectionary.

But to answer your question, a lectionary is basically just a Bible reading plan. Growing up, I grew up Baptist and I served in a Presbyterian context previously. I was more familiar with the concept of a Bible reading plan.

I was like, lectionary, what's that? But lectionary is appointed readings that take you through the Bible. So a lectionary like the book of Common Prayer is wanting to be in use primarily for the Church. So that was kind of an initial surprise for me.

The lectionary that we have for morning and evening prayer, for communion readings, actually was intended for public worship primarily and not primarily for individual devotion. It was assumed and encouraged and exhorted even that you would be individually doing devotions and reading your Bible more broadly. But the lectionary was a way for the Church together to be exposed to Scripture in an orderly, systematic way.

Being exposed not just to as much Scripture as possible, but to high points of Scripture where it's not possible to assign all the Bible to be read in a year in a church service. And so yeah, a lectionary is basically a patterned, thought out way of exposing the Church to the whole counsel of God as it is in the Bible. Can you say a bit more about the way in which the lectionary that you're using from the book of Common Prayer is distinctive from other lectionaries? What is distinctive about, for instance, the theological rationale

of the lectionary and how is that reflected in the choice of lessons? Yeah, so there are multiple lectionaries in the book of Common Prayer.

We should explain that. The one that most people would be focusing on is the one that would be used primarily on Sundays or for other holy days, the communion propers. And that one takes you through Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, so forth.

It's actually not terribly unique. For the most part, Cranmer received the historic one-year lectionary that had already been in use. And so you can pretty much every week, what we'll be reading in the communion service, you can find that present in earlier sources of church history, going back to Gregory the Great and even into the fourth century sometimes.

Usually I check a web page that kind of collects sermons that match up with the lectionary, and almost every week there'll be a sermon based on one of the texts from John Chrysostom. So that shows you how old this one is. Then on top of that, there is the Old Testament readings, the Sunday first lessons.

These were added by Archbishop Parker under Queen Elizabeth. These are again meant for Sundays. And only the 1662 has these readings.

So that's definitely where it's very unique, these Sunday first lessons, which I've come to really love. Then you have your monthly psalm cycle. So there are psalms to be read in the morning and evening of every day throughout the month.

The idea behind that was basically to take kind of a monastic practice, you know, praying the hours, being steeped in the psalms, but to give that to every Christian. So not only the priesthood of all believers, but perhaps the monkhood of all believers. And then to go with that is the daily office, so readings for every day.

And those are going to be basically consecutive through the canon of Scripture. So Genesis, Exodus, so forth, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, so forth. And the idea there is to take you through not all of the Bible, they do skip over parts that they thought might be too complicated or tricky or perhaps misleading to people in that time in history, who would not have always had resources and, you know, handy expositors to explain things.

So you'll notice Revelation is not there. Song of Songs is not there. Big chunks of Leviticus are not there.

Genealogies are not there. So it's not the entire Bible, but it is a lot. And the idea is you'd get through the Old Testament once in a year, the New Testament three times in a year, and you do the psalms every month.

If we're going to go back to some of the earliest examples of people exploring the logic of the lectionary and the ways that it informs homiletical practice, where would be some

of the sources that we would go to? So preaching from the lectionary, you know, this is probably a project that needs more work. Not to say people aren't preaching for lectionary, but I think that it's going to be critical. It's going to sound mean, but I think many people agree.

Lots of churches that use the lectionary for their church life, they are not known for being the best and leading preachers and sermons. You know, especially today, right? If you're going to say, who are the best preachers? Who are the people that everybody is crazy about and they want to listen to? Probably free church backgrounds, right? Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, so forth. And you check out, well, what is the Anglican, the Lutheran, the Catholic, what's the preaching thing like there? And boy, these sermons are short, right? Eight minutes, 10 minutes, maybe 15 minutes long.

Nothing wrong with short sermons, Stephen. Well, that's right. I don't want to step on Alistair's toes, but of course, he's got you doing an hour of Sunday school, and then you're listening to these intense podcasts, and you're executing from the original languages.

So you don't need a long sermon, right? But yeah, lectionary preaching, I think probably right now, it's not at its strength, and people tend to struggle with it. And that's probably one reason that we wanted to do this podcast, was to try to explain the logic of the lectionary, how it's used, how it can help you read Scripture better, and then how you can preach it. So sources to look for, I think the older sources, I mentioned Chrysostom, Luther, they're regularly also will be a go-to source for the lectionary proffers and readings.

There's a site that's online, I think it's called [lectionarycentral.com](http://lectionarycentral.com), and they try to collate sources they think are helpful, people that preach through the lectionary. But it'll be slim pickings, you're looking at three, four, maybe five characters. So yeah, there's a lot of work to be done there still, I think.

Clayton, do you have any other thoughts? Well, I know there are some more recent works that have come out with regard to the revised common lectionary, as far as preaching the revised common lectionary, since that has, post-Vatican II, come to be in use by Catholics and Lutherans, Episcopalians. So there are some books like that, there's not really that for the 1662, at least among the modern I'm aware of. So I think our podcast is trying to fill a bit of a gap there.

I'd love to see something like that for the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, just kind of like, yeah, homiletical book on preaching it. So that's kind of what we're wanting to do. We're wanting to, in this podcast, talk about the lectionary, talk about the readings, what the connections are between them, but also with a view to how might pastors think about preaching this.

So yeah, we're trying to kind of fill that gap. It'd be great. And I expect we will see a book along those lines soon.

We're starting to see more and more things on the horizon when it comes to Anglican formularies, and even the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, largely thanks to a couple guys at Stephen's Church who have republished it, the 1662 International Edition, just a couple years ago. Susanna and I use that for our family devotions. It's highly recommended.

It's a beautiful volume, and yeah, it really retains the character of the original. Could you say a bit about the way that the lectionary relates to the church calendar? Stephen laid out the various lectionaries that are in the Book of Common Prayer, and it's interesting. So you have the daily office lectionary for every day, for certain readings, two readings for morning prayer, two readings for evening prayer every day.

And that's really based on the calendar, like the 12-month calendar. And so in January, you'll start in Genesis 1 and Matthew 1 and Romans 1. The first lesson for morning and evening is going to be Old Testament. So it's going to be sequential.

So it goes Genesis 1, first lesson in the morning, Genesis 2, first lesson in the evening, and so forth. And then, yeah, you'll get through the New Testament multiple times in a year, I think three times. And then most of the Old Testament and a sampling of some apocryphal books, which are not viewed as on the same level as scripture, but are read for another reason.

So that's the basic structure of the daily office lectionary, which Stephen and I don't discuss, so I won't spend too much time on that. But I will note that it actually does end with Isaiah. So after the apocryphal books, beginning in late November, you switch over to Isaiah.

And why is that? Well, I think that is a little bit of influence of the church year. Around that time is when you're going to get into Advent, and Isaiah is typically read during Advent. And so you do kind of see that even in the daily office lectionary.

Now, when we go to the proper lessons, which will be for Sundays and holy days, every Sunday is a holy day, by the way, according to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. That's going to start you in Isaiah in Advent. So this is the church year calendar, going for the proper lessons.

That's going to start you with your first lessons, the Old Testament lessons in Isaiah. And you're going to read that during Advent and Christmas and Epiphany, which is a... Yeah, that's something that had been done historically in the church going back centuries, to read Isaiah during Advent to kind of prepare your hearts for this coming of Christ and Isaiah being viewed as the fifth gospel. So then another kind of traditional historical thing

to do is to read Genesis during the Jezimas, which is the Sundays leading up to Lent.

So then that's when the proper lessons, the Sunday first lessons, the Old Testament ones, those are going to go, beginning at Septuagesima to Genesis, and take you through again. This is just for Sundays and holy days, so you're not going to be able to get all the Old Testament in one lesson in the morning, one lesson in the evening. But it's going to, from Septuagesima, take you sequentially through the Old Testament.

And it's going to be selective, but it's going to kind of get you certain high points that are chosen. And it's going to take you through, you know, in order so that you'll finish out the church year in the Book of Proverbs, which actually puts at the end after the prophets. So yeah, that's the kind of idea behind the first lessons for Sundays.

And then each Sunday also going to have a communion service, historically, which would have an epistle and gospel reading. And so, as Stephen already mentioned, that epistle and gospel reading is not, oftentimes those are not invented by Cranmer, but he's going to be using what had previously been in use in England before the Reformation. Sometimes he'll make certain adjustments, but largely those are the same.

And then, but the first lessons were created special during the Reformation time. And I think Stephen knows a little bit more about that. So he can maybe talk about how those came into being.

Yeah, well, so just to back up to the question about how does it match the church year, just briefly for people that may not be totally familiar, you know, you have Advent, Christmas, Epiphany. The jesumas are kind of falling out of use, unfortunately, one of the casualties of the 20th century liturgical renewal project. But the jesumas were a pivot season between Epiphany to Lent.

So they're changing your perspective there. And they're numbered as, you know, 70, 60, 50, and then Lent begins as 40, 40 days to Easter. So jesumas are kind of pre-Lent, Lent, a time of fasting, focusing on sin, and then preparing for the death of Christ or remembering the death of Christ rather, and then Easter.

After Easter, you have a series of individual holy days. You know, you have Easter, you have Ascension, you have Pentecost, and then the long second half of the church year is Trinity season. That too has been changed in modern lectionaries.

Sometimes now they just call that either Pentecost season or ordinary time, but in the 1662, it's called Trinity season. And that's the basic liturgical year outline. You can even half that.

You can say the first half is incarnation cycle, and the second half is the spirit at work in the church. George Herbert says the first half of the year is the incarnation. The second half of the year is the Trinity.

So incarnation, meaning the person of Christ coming to earth, suffering, dying, resurrected, and then the Trinity being all of God at work in the church and the people of God. So that's the basic church year. But then you have these first lessons.

These were unique to the Church of England and Anglicanism. Sadly, they too have kind of fallen out of use because you're going to be reading a whole chapter. So Old Testament is already a tough sell for moderns, but a full chapter of the Old Testament, and at least on one Sunday, I think you get two full chapters because of the prophecies of Balaam.

So those unfortunately have fallen out of use. Also, I think they've fallen out of use because people are not doing morning prayer in church anymore. People have moved to only doing the communion service as the Sunday service.

And of course, you don't have the historic Old Testament readings in that service. So the first lessons we're trying to give more exposure to precisely because they've been lost, but they are prescribed for the morning prayer service on Sundays. And as Clayton said, they're largely a consecutive survey hitting the high points of the Old Testament.

So a bit from Genesis, a bit from Exodus, and so forth. But it's really interesting. I've been trying to figure out more of the logic here.

I don't know that I've solved the puzzle totally, but they are thematic. And there's a narrative and idea that they're clearly trying to get out there, much more so than simply what are the most famous stories? Because there are a lot of famous stories that don't get treated, and there's a lot of obscure stories that they choose. And you go, what's going on with that? The only selections from Judges are two chapters that have to do with Deborah in jail.

So, you know, no Samson. So, similarly, there's almost nothing about Solomon in the Kingdom Era. Now you do in the season with a lot of wisdom literature, but there's no Solomon.

You got to go David, and then you skip over from David to Elijah fighting all the bad kings. So they're clearly trying to give you some narrative. I think it's a bit of a redemptive historical survey.

So it starts with Isaiah teaching you Christology, teaching you typology. This is what to be looking for and how to unlock the Old Testament. Then it gives you creation, but quickly fall.

So Christology, creation, fall, takes you through the Exodus cycle and the plagues. And then when you get into the Kingdom Era, it's already giving you failings of the kingdom. You know, we're not really there yet.



We've got something yet to come. So I do think while it's a consecutive survey, I think Archbishop Parker was trying also to teach us a redemptive historical hermeneutic of the Old Testament. So that's one of the things I've been most excited to sort of find in this lectionary.

Could you discuss a little the way in which the readings fit into the wider service? They don't just stand out by themselves. They're something that belongs to the actual fabric of the service. Could you discuss some of the ways in which they are connected to the collect and other things like that? Oh, well, yeah, we should have probably said this at the beginning.

Thanks for asking. The collect of the day. So collect is a short prayer.

There are lots of collects in the BCP. But the collect of the day, that changes. That's a proper collect that's specific to the day of the year.

And it is sort of the place where you will find the theme. And usually the collect of the day is how you can sort out why these selections were all chosen, how they go together. So, for example, this week is the 11th Sunday after Trinity.

It opens up the collect says, O God, who declarest thy almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity. So what you'll notice is in all of the readings, mercy and pity, and pity being connected with humility, you know, someone who needs pity. They are in a humble state, a pitiable person.

That's going to show up in all the readings. So the Epistle reading is 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul retells the gospel. But he says, I'm the least of all the apostles.

You know, I was a persecutor. The gospel reading is the Pharisee and the tax collector in the temple. Pharisee is very prideful.

Tax collector is very pitiable. And then the Old Testament takes a little more wrestling with to figure out, but it's the baptism of Naaman the Syrian. He's prideful, has to be humble in order to be healed.

And then the reading for Evensong is the death of all of these historic enemies, especially Jezebel. So the prideful that didn't humble themselves. And so they don't receive pity.

Yeah. So that's a good specific example. When it comes to the Holy Day readings, I think many people first think of the Collect Epistle Gospel, because those are all right next to each other in the Book of Common Prayer, and they tend to be just all right there.

And so we think, okay, so here are some themes from the Collect. How do we see those in the Epistle? How do we see those in the Gospel? And often you'll see that they are

indeed playing off of each other, often not just restating each other, but adding something new. And then that next one might explain more that something new that was added in.

So it often doesn't feel repetitive. The Collect will just be all about one thing, and then that's exactly what, and only what all the rest will be about. But sometimes there'll be a variety of themes, and one will be highlighted in the Epistle, one will be in the Gospel.

And then that's where the Old Testament lessons come in, because the Old Testament lessons, the first lessons from the 1662 are just forgotten and neglected, especially in an American context. And when people hear about them, they don't sound very church year liturgical in the sense of like, shouldn't everything just be tracking straight with the church year all the time? It all be tied to the Collect Epistle Gospel, which will be tied to the season, whether it's Easter or Lent or whatever it may be. Shouldn't the Old Testament lessons, why should they be in order? Isn't that restricting us? Are they just kind of random? Are they just totally separate following their own logic that's different? And what I've found using this now for over a year in my own church context is there are multiple levels at which those Old Testament lessons are functioning.

So on one level, yes, they are just taking you through, exposing everyone on Sundays and Holy Days to the high points of the Old Testament. You could view it that way. But in another way, they are somewhat tracking with the church year, because you start with Isaiah in Advent, that's intentional.

And on specific days, rarely actually, it'll actually break from the order to just like on Trinity Sunday, it's just, it goes back to Genesis 1 and Genesis 18. And you know, with Sunday, it goes to Isaiah 11. And on Ascension Day, it takes you to the Ascension of Elijah.

And that's Second Kings 2 or First Kings 2? Second Kings 2. Yeah, there you go. So, you know, sometimes it will actually break from that. So yeah, at times it is tracking with the church year, and there may be thematic kind of resonances to just more broadly, okay, it's a time of Lent, it makes sense that we're reading about these failures of the patriarchs or, you know, acts of judgment in Genesis and so forth.

And then Easter, it gets into Exodus, so that on Easter Day, you read about Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. I mean, that's not an accident. And yet, that's actually an instance where the Old Testament lessons did not have to break from going in order, they're still going in order.

It's amazing. So I think they're operating on multiple levels, you know, exposing people to the high points of the Old Testament, yes, but also kind of thematically related to the church year as well. And sometimes very directly, even, like, it'll be intimately tied to that Collect.

A couple of Sundays ago, we had what I've begun to call False Prophet Sunday, because that's a Sunday where, I actually can't remember the Collect very well, but I remember the Gospel was Jesus saying, beware of false prophets. I'm gonna have to check now, it's gonna bother me. Yeah, the Collect says, you know, put away from us all hurtful things and give us those things that are profitable.

Okay, and then the Epistles Romans 8, 12 to 17, which has a lot there, but one of the things where it starts off is, if you live after the flesh, you shall die. But if you through the spirit mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live. And then in Matthew 7, the Gospel reading, we were, beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.

And then the Old Testament reading for that Sunday, the 8th Sunday after Trinity, is 1 Kings 13, a story of a man of God from Judah going to prophesy to the wicked king, but then who is enticed by a prophet in Bethel, lied to by that prophet to disobey God's word, and then he is mauled by a lion. So, I mean, like, it's not accidental. You see that happening over and over again.

So I've just been amazed, honestly, at the way in which those first lessons are working, how they work on those multiple levels. Really impressive when you think, how would you do that, right? How would you pick readings that had three layers of logic and they work that way? I mean, you'd have to know your Bible so very well to do that. There seems to be a deep reflection that undergirds these choices of lessons about how the lectionary should inform those who are attending in the hearing and the understanding of Scripture.

And you've already discussed some of that. How does the preacher assist and bring out that logic? And how does your podcast really answer to that challenge and equip pastors in that task? Well, I think at least two things really have impressed themselves upon me from this study. One, I mentioned the redemptive historical hermeneutics.

You know, so much of my own Bible reading and preaching has been impacted and influenced by you, Alistair, and then by those men who I think are your influences as well, especially a Peter Lighthouse and a Jim Jordan and those kind of guys, even some rabbis out there, right? So that reading, that style of reading, making parallels and echoes and connections and finding arcs and typologies, it's so important. But what's been amazing about this BCB study is you say, wait, that isn't totally brand new. You know, N.T. Wright is not correct about that.

These folks actually did know about reading in this manner. And in fact, they put it in the weekly cycle of the life of the church. So I think that it will further help us with our biblical theology and our hermeneutics.

But then secondly, I think the BCP, especially in the collects, it connects these themes to

the Christian life, sanctification, piety, living. There's no opposition. Those are not in competition.

It's not do you do a typological reading or do you do an application based reading? They tie them together. And I think that's been super helpful. It can help form our preaching to give us both of those strengths and then to avoid the false dichotomies.

The role of wisdom literature is often puzzled about by pastors and preachers. We think, I want to preach the gospel or maybe I want to exhort people to follow God's commandments. But what's the role of wisdom literature that talks about not talking to someone too loud in the morning or they'll hate you and things like that? And there can be a neglect of the wisdom literature.

But one of the things about the one-year lectionary here is it actually prioritizes the wisdom literature in the sense of it puts it at the end of each church year in the Sunday and Holy Day proper lessons. And even in the daily office lectionary, it has the apocryphal books, which I read the 39 articles say, not because they're scripture, but because they give us examples of life and instruction of manners. So it's kind of wisdom oriented.

It really privileges wisdom of Solomon and the book of Sirach, which are two wisdom apocryphal books. So I think the daily office lectionary and the proper lessons follow a similar idea, which is to say, okay, in light of all this revelation of God's saving purposes, and in light of what we're called to do, how should we actually live wisely in the world? And so I think it also recognizes the proper place, I think, of wisdom literature by putting it kind of as, in a sense, our response to everything we just heard, like, okay, now let's walk wisely in this world. So one more idea.

So if you're preparing a sermon and you're attending to the lectionary and the specific lessons that have been chosen, how can it empower your preaching? How can it give you material for application and for connection that you might not otherwise have? How is it different also from the experience of teaching in a church where you don't have that sort of lectionary undergirding your preaching? Yeah, I think that a couple of things have struck me because I have been in churches where we didn't use any lectionary at all, and I've been fairly committed to following the lectionary for my first time here at the church, just so that I'm doing my part to really become a good Anglican. And a few things have really stuck out at me. First of all, it kind of does force you out of your comfort zone.

Some weeks that may not be true. It'll be such a famous story, okay, I could preach this in my sleep. But sometimes you will get passages you really don't know what to do with.

There's the parable of the shrewd manager that comes up. That's a communion proper. Okay, I've got to preach this and explain what's going on with this guy slashing his

master's debts.

Yeah, you've got to deal with that. But at the same time, because it's paired with other readings, and it's paired with this collect, which is highlighting some themes, that usually gives you some good clues as to what you want to be talking about. It helps you on the way.

So that's been really encouraging. And also matching it with the cycle of the church year, that can also give you clues. Okay, is this a passage that's going to be mostly messianic? Is this a passage that's going to be talking about the trinity and the doctrine of God? Is this a passage that's more about sin and repentance and atonement? Not that they're ever exhausted that way, but those can be aids to help you get the most out of a passage that you may not otherwise do.

Yeah, I think that it puts, in a sense, it could be viewed as putting less in your control. So kind of growing up in evangelical context, I would hear, you know, expositional preaching, that's what should always be done. Not topical, like topical, that puts too much in your control.

You can just preach whatever you want. But something I've come to kind of sense, even as a pastor, when I was in a non-Eng looking context, you know, just like, okay, I'll just go through books of the Bible. It still leaves quite a bit in my control.

Because I'll say, okay, for the next two years or so, we're going to go through this one book that I chose, probably because I'm comfortable with it. And I don't know how many series I've heard in my life on Ephesians, but I've heard a ton. Sorry, Stephen, I know you preach through Ephesians.

It's a great book. It's good to preach. But there was a time where, you know, I was moving around with two different churches and I heard the same book like three times.

And it's not necessarily bad because, you know, it's a one-year lectionary, right? But it's still just one book out of the whole Bible instead of exposing you to a whole range of material. So I think that the lectionary is a way of, in a good way, leaving it less in your control. It's not just all up to you to decide what your church needs to hear this year for two years straight or something like that.

And, you know, it's always going to be presenting you with various scriptures from both testaments. And you'll have to think hard about, okay, how are these related? And I think that's a good discipline for pastors to have. And as we kind of already mentioned, each of those readings aren't just going to be all saying the same thing.

Like it's rarely like the epistle reading is going to be about some prophecy and then the Old Testament reading is going to be that chapter of Isaiah or something. It's going to be a little bit, it's going to require a bit more thought than that, but that will kind of help you

flex your skills of reading the Bible just as a more cohesive book and relating all scripture to each other. So I think it's good to have a lectionary and this one in particular to kind of guide you as you're seeking to teach, preach, and disciple.

Also, I think the lectionary, at least this one we're using, it really gives you the capability to plot out a very long-term vision. Because if you do morning prayer and Holy Communion, then you're going to have had a big chunk of the Old Testament you could talk about. You've got all those Psalms you could talk about.

You've got a gospel reading. You've got an epistle you can talk about. And you don't have to talk about every one of them every week.

You can choose from them and you can plot out and say, okay, for this year, I'm going to really hit the gospels. Maybe next year I'll do the Old Testament. And it gives you lots of material that way for a very long-term vision, but they're connected.

So some of that organizational work that does take up a lot of the pastor's time, that's taken care of for you. That's already done. And it frees you up then to dig into the study, to craft the sermon for your people, and then have a coherent plan for several years.

And I imagine going through the cycle over many years, it just reinforces the lessons from the previous year. Each time you're building upon what you've already built as a pastor. One thing that you've both commented upon in various ways or touched upon is the way that the lectionary represents a vision for the place of Scripture in the heart of the church and in the life of Christians.

Could you speak more directly to that question? How is it that the lectionary and the liturgy more generally within the Book of Common Prayer envisages the place that Scripture should occupy within the church? Not totally sure if this is getting at what you're asking, so you can let me know if it's not. But I think that it's certainly highlighting the centrality of the Scriptures and the life of the church and the life of the Christian. So I think there's a whole lot of care and thought that went into crafting this.

And that's reflecting an understanding of Scripture as fundamental to our life as Christians. Like the Word of God gives life. And so I think a lot of people, if they're drawn to Anglicanism or a more liturgical tradition, they're often not thinking about Scripture.

They're thinking about other things, which may also be good and worth talking about, certain forms of worship and so forth. But you can't escape, for the Anglican reformers reflected in the Book of Common Prayer, just the centrality that the Scriptures have. The first homily in the Book of Homilies is a fruitful exhortation on the reading of Scriptures, like telling everyone to be reading their Bibles and to meditate on it, to chew upon it, and suck the sweetness out of them because they're your life.

They are what are going to be the means of God and your growth in Christ and your

bearing good fruit. So yeah, I think just generally it highlights the centrality that they should have in the life of the church and the individual. Yeah, also the role of Scripture, especially in the morning and evening prayer services, you could kind of think of communion is a sacramental service.

It's very obvious. The Lord's Supper, the Eucharist is going to be the sacrament there. But you could think of the morning and evening prayers also as something of a sacramental service, except the thing that's sacramental for them is precisely the reading of the Scriptures.

And so for morning prayer, you can really see this in how the lectionary works. Before you can read the Scripture, you've got to confess your sin. And then you have this reading of Psalm 95, you know, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.

So this like, hey, you're about to hear the Bible. You're about to hear God's word. Be ready.

And then after all of the readings, you have these songs of praise and response. So the Gloria Patris, after the Psalm reading, after the first reading, the first lesson, you have either the Te Deum, we praise the O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord, or you do the Benedictus, which is an extended song of praise of God's creational work. And then after the second lesson, you're going to sing the Benedictus, which is the song of John the Baptist's parents.

So that's, it says, if you've heard the gospel, so now you're proclaiming the coming of the Messiah. It's a really, really showing what you're supposed to think, how you're supposed to value the scripture. This is God showing up in your midst, revealing himself, making himself known to you.

So it's very powerful. It makes it an experience, I would say. Yeah, so that's been something that I've noticed coming to it has really struck me.

So this podcast project that you've started is one that's been inspired by the place that the Lectionary has in the heart of Anglican worship in its original form, certainly, and the maybe a response to what has been lost in many contexts of Anglicanism. Could you speak a bit to the structure of the podcast, what you're hoping to achieve through it? Who is it produced for? Sure, yeah. When I wanted to do it, and I reached out to Clayton to see if he would join in, two main goals.

One, I wanted it to be a way to spotlight the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. So I'm sort of jumping in on that project that Clayton alluded to, others, Sam Bray and Drew Keene have republished the 1662 in the International Edition. There's also a lot of other projects in the works.

There's a book coming out called How to Read, or sorry, How to Use the Book of

Common Prayer. So it's kind of an instructor and a primer there. People are interested in putting back out the prayer book Catechism that has largely been lost, but there was a small catechism in the 1662.

People are interested in putting out the homilies, Lee Gatiss is doing that. So this was a way to join in on that larger project. Let's get the Lectionary out there.

Let's get access to the Lectionary, draw attention to it, especially those parts of the Lectionary which have been lost. You really probably don't have any other access to them. So that was the first goal.

And the second goal was, I'm preaching on this stuff anyway. Clayton is preaching on this stuff anyway. So let's make this a resource for pastors, how they can use this Lectionary in their actual Sunday life, how to make sermons, how to preach this stuff.

Yeah, group sermon prep has been great. And I'd like to see more of it just more generally. It's helpful to talk to another learned minister about the readings.

So that's another benefit to using it. You can step into a community of ministers who are thinking about how to preach it. But yeah, I'd say it's also just, I can see it being something that lay people could benefit from as well.

I think there's a lot of people in our churches who might not use the BCB as much, might not be as familiar with it, even though they come on Sundays and other days. So to hear each week, these readings talked about, I can see that being beneficial even just for lay people who want to understand more, why are we hearing this on Sundays? The readings that are on Sundays, I think are really there intentionally and with thought, and we get the most benefit from them when we think carefully about that and kind of understand what's going on. So I think, you know, for lay people, maximal edification, it's helpful to hear them talked about as well.

I also think there's a benefit for lay people to see how the sausage is made, as it were. How do you actually prepare a sermon? And how does a sermon actually serve as a response to the text and its own logic? How is it elucidating something that's within the text itself, rather than just using the text as a pretext for its own agenda? And it seems to me the sort of project that you're doing exhibits that responsibility to the text, that concern to understand the logic of the text itself, the ways that it relates to other texts within the intertextuality of Scripture more generally, the way that the tradition has understood the relationship between different texts and the process of formation of Christians within the world of the text, that this is the world that we inhabit as the people of God. And we need to understand ourselves within this story, within this world, and that this world is the real world.

And the more that you understand that logic, and you see the way that pastors who are



being faithful in this task are approaching it, the more I think you can gain confidence in actually engaging in the task of worship. You're not always second guessing what's going on. You're not having to stand back, you can throw yourself into it and recognize that this was designed in order that you could fully participate and be shaped by it in the process.

Stephen and Clayton, thank you so much for joining me. Tell me about where we can find your podcast, what platforms is it on, and how people can also support your work? Oh, what a great question, Alistair. Thank you.

So it's called the BCP Proppers Podcast, and we're on Apple Podcasts, we're on Spotify, we're on Stitcher, and all these other groups. We actually just plug it into a program that distributes it to all of these things, so you should be able to find us on any major podcast platform. On Twitter, I'll always put the link so you can find me on there, at Wedgetweets.

Clayton, what's your handle? At Clayton Hutchins. Easy, see? We're there. Church web pages as well.

So yeah, how to support us? Well, of course, you can always send us checks and money orders, and we will love you forever, but probably just listen, talk about it, check out the websites of our various churches, our diocese, Anglican Diocese of Living Word. Go out and buy a copy of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. I think those would all be great ways to join into the project.

Thank you very much, and thank you to all of you who have listened. God bless.