

Week 34: Aug. 25 (Aug. 18–Aug. 24)

- Begin the fascinating story of Esther, set sometime around 460 BCE
- Too timely: plot by Haman to destroy all the Jews living in the kingdom
- Esther steps up to thwart the plot in response to Mordecai's words, "Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this."
- She asks the king, "Spare my people", revealing that she too was a Jew
- The king agrees to Esther's request and kills Haman instead.
- Purim is the observation remembering Esther and her courage
- We then move on to the Book of Job and we meet a new character: someone called "Satan"!
- God seems to be quite willing to make bet with Satan, with Job and his happiness the subject of the bet
- Everything is taken from Job: his children, his wealth, his health. He's left so destitute that his wife tells him, "Curse God and die!"
- But Job is resolute.
- Job's friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar come to comfort him; the four then talk...and talk...and talk...
- Job is angry, and feels that he's been treated unfairly by God: "I will not keep silent. I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit."
- He wants to confront God and make his case to God: "Why do you not pardon my offense and forgive my sins?"
- "Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me?"
- "Stop frightening me with your terrors. Summon me and I will answer...Show me my offense and my sin"
- Paul's letter to the Corinthians gives us "the words of institution" we use for the Lord's Supper (11:23ff/p. 759)
- Lots of different approaches to the Lord's Supper - the what, the when, the how, etc.
- Paul then speaks to the gifts of the Spirit - how we each have different gifts given us: "now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." Common good - the good of all, for, as Paul then tells us, we are the body of Christ
- We need one another - "there should be no division in the body,...its parts should have equal concern for each other."
- Paul's famous words of love: "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or clanging cymbal..." Words not written with marriage in mind, yet so very appropriate for weddings.

- “Love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy...Love never fails”
- “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love”
- “Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church”
- Again, some confusion about what is meant by “speaking in tongues”; the reference is to another language. It is just gibberish if it is not understood.
- “Everything must be done so that the church may be built up”
- Just when things seemed calm, Paul roils the waters: “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. ...It is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church” (8/22/p. 774)
- The Presbyterian’s favorite verse: “Everything should done in a fitting and orderly way” NRSV: “all things should be done decently and in order”
- As Paul begins to wrap up his letter, he speaks to the promise of resurrection
- He addresses the mystery of what life will be like in the resurrection, when we will have spiritual bodies; death will die
- Psalm 37:7 - “Be still before the Lord”
- Proverbs 21:21 - “Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity, and honor”
- Proverbs 21:23 - “Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity”