

## Understanding Episcopal Liturgy

*#9. What is the reason our Gospel lesson comes from Matthew almost every week?*

There are four Gospels, yet most weeks of the coming year our Gospel lesson will come from the Gospel of Matthew. That's because our scripture readings are not chosen by the priest, or by anyone else at St. Paul's. For centuries, leaders of Episcopal, Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox churches have arranged scripture readings in a systematic way, which is called a *Lectionary*. The idea behind a *Lectionary* is to systematically make our way through much of the Old and New Testaments in a three-year cycle.

If you attend Sunday worship each week, over the course of three years, you will hear most of the New Testament and almost half of the Old Testament. This three-year cycle is designated with three letters: A, B and C. The arrangement of Gospel lessons over the three years is easy to see. In Year A, most of our Gospel readings are from Matthew. In Year B, most of our Gospel readings are from Mark. In Year C, most of our Gospel readings are from Luke. Each year, we read portions of the Gospel of John in the weeks before and after Easter.

Year A began with the first Sunday of Advent, on November 30th, and will continue until the Sunday before Thanksgiving, next November. Beginning the first Sunday of Advent, at the end of November in 2026, we will begin Year B, and our Gospel readings will be from Mark.