

Introduction

Back in the days of sharper eyes and flexier knees, I used to hunt for beach agates. There were certain disciplines that helped. A slow plod made for the best pace. Eyes angled slightly forward to catch glistenings of mineral illuminated by a coastal sky. A modest light from the overcast was best, much preferred over a sunny blinding glare or the curtaining of Pacific Northwest soaking rains. Once a candidate was spotted, the knees took over to provide a closer look that would confirm the find. Or not. In any case: time must be taken, attention must be paid.

I have long since lost the mimeographed sheet from my first year at seminary that laid out a process for digging into a Biblical text. As I remember, the pattern followed that of hunting for agates. Time must be taken – to search words in search of Word. Attention must be paid – not just to the obvious and familiar, but to the things and ones hidden in plain sight. Things and ones that might be revealing of the Big Picture. Hidden gems.

All of which is to introduce a trial run of this digital companion for worship preparation. For the next 8 weeks, I will root around in the coming Sunday's texts for some hidden gem. Perhaps a word easily overlooked but telling. Perhaps meanings or patterns or parallels clearer in the original languages than their English renderings. Perhaps some aspect of context or rhetoric that sheds light on the whole. Or perhaps ? Your opinions will be welcomed by Pastor Amalia and me as to whether this is a useful guide to continue. . . or to give it a proper burial.

There will be a link to *Hidden Gems* in the weekly e-mailings. I will seek to keep each one close to the length of this introduction. Not because more could not be said – but in hopes that more of your time and attention will be spent in your own further exploring.

John Indermark