

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan

THE BIBLICAL WILD

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WEEK XXII: I Chronicles 25 – II Chronicles
12 / Psalm 124

From Psalm 121. Let us pray.

I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. Amen.

I'm Todd Ousley, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan and this is the Biblical Wild, pioneers in the Christian wilderness.

We continue with the history of the world part II, a consideration of the books of I and II Chronicles, here on the steps of the Hoyt library. Last week we ended with the notion that books of the Chronicles are more opera than history. One way of understanding this observation is that the challenges being faced in the postexilic period and beyond were such a significant break from the past challenges. But there is no way to see a way forward into the future without a radical departure from past interpretive frameworks. This understanding is informative for our contemporary challenges. For example, the challenges of an increasingly secular and ambivalent to hostile to Christianity culture, mean that we must search the narratives of scripture and tradition for signs of a hopeful future. Appeal to the circumstances in the Acts of the Apostles, certainly a hostile and secular environment, have a certain currency today. We look there for some signs of how to proceed in the face of our own challenges by reimagining the text in ways that can guide us today. Other imaginative acts we embrace are new ways of presenting the gospel messages or new languages or translations. Dramatic presentations, such as Jesus Christ Superstar, The Last Temptation of Christ, the television series A.D. are tweeting out our messages. New and contemporary versions of scripture, such as Eugene Peterson's "The Message," fresh expressions of church or the emerge of church. And what about reinterpreting the circumstances of Tudor England, and the Continental and English Reformation, or the Elizabethan settlement? Interpreting them for our own time of turmoil and decline that is leading to something new which we can't quite see now. I Chronicles begins with the first nine chapters being an extensive genealogy, the most extensive that is presented anywhere in Holy Scripture. It is a way of quickly summarizing a great deal of the past, while simultaneously validating the present through continuity with the past. This reminds me of an intuitive act I took in my first call as rector. I was two years out of seminary, had served as a very junior staff member in a large church, when I received a call to a much smaller congregation. A congregation that had been through much. The dissolution of a pastoral relationship, and two failed search processes. Age thirty two, never having been a rector I looked for something that I could identify with that could perhaps reassure this congregation of older adults that I could be their priest. I discovered on my bookshelves, as I prepared to move, a little book that had been given to me by Louise Silly, the widow of the former suffragan bishop of Texas, Roger Silly. Roger at age thirty two, had been called to serve the same church that I was about to serve. So on my first Sunday, I pulled out that little book, and I quoted from it and read the frontispiece that had inscribed in it the Reverend Roger Silly. My connection to that past and a time of hopefulness for them was a way for them to reframe all that they had been through and to see our days together as something filled with hope and possibility. The imaginative use of remembered stories of a hopeful and positive past that can shed light on and lend positive

character to present circumstances, enable us to approach an unsettled time with the sense of hope, rather than despair. As you go into I and II Chronicles this week, I invite you to consider the following question:

1. What positive stories from the past can you use to enable a positive approach to the future? Your congregation's future?

May God bless you, and I will see you next week as we go into part III of the history of the world, a further consideration of I and II Chronicles.