

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan

THE BIBLICAL WILD

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Biblical Wild, pioneers in the Christian wilderness.

In our final consideration of the books of Chronicles we must note that when we read history, listen to chronicles of past events, and ponder interpretations of that history, we inevitably appropriate events in different ways at different points in our lives. For example, when we are quite young, we hear stories of our national history that impart stories of heroic proportion, and we incorporate those into understanding as quite literal stories. George Washington who could not tell his father a lie, heroism by Washington and his troops in a tough winter at Valley Forge, the crossing of the Delaware, etcetera, etcetera. We go on telling stories about our national figures that lift them from their common humanity to persons of mythic proportions. There's a way of incarnating national truth, and providing a narrative and a memorable way to pass along cultural values from one generation to the next. And so it is with scripture. And this is no more clearly evident than in the books of Chronicles. It's a human story, rooted in Adam, continued in the sons of Noah and going onto Abraham, which then moves to David and Solomon, to the sons of Levi and ultimately the hope for the present and for the future, which comes in a foreign King Cyrus of Persia, who facilitates the restoration of Jerusalem and the cultic practices of the temple. Along the way, pieces of the story are both incorporated and they are dropped from the narrative. They are reshaped and given new meaning. Pieces are left out and pieces are collapsed together. David and Solomon get cleaned up. The warts are no longer there, but rather, they rise like Washington to a persons of mythic proportions. In the narrative that begins to articulate a revised ideal, it's a notion of restoration that may not look exactly like the past, but it has continuity with the essential features of the past. It moves faithfully and obediently into the future. Like secular needs to collapse the narratives, idealized leaders reimagine the past in ways that give shape and hope to the present and the emerging future. So scripture also acts as a source of imagination that is faithful to past, present, and future, but allowing a dynamic, rather than static character to emerge. It's a way of telling that is not bound rigidly to the past, but which honors the past and gives hopeful shape to both past and future. In our own Diocesan narrative, we tell stories of the split from the Diocese of Michigan. We tell positive stories, and we tell negative stories. Stories that get told and retold and reshaped to fit the circumstances over time. In the beginning we saw ourselves really as the Diocese of not Michigan, and much of our own retelling and reliving the story and moving into the future was a shift from being not Michigan to being Eastern Michigan. The facts remain the same. The history that could be told and may someday be written is still there. But we've reshaped those stories to give ourselves a positive and hopeful future. To talk about who we are now and who God is calling us to be in the

WEEK XXIII: II Chronicles 13-30 / Psalm 130

From Psalm 130. Let us pray.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If you, O Lord should mark my inequities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. Amen.

I'm Todd Ousley, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan and this is the

years ahead. Faithful and imaginative retelling of our stories can redeem the past and point a future that is filled with hope and possibility. As you conclude your study of the books of I and II Chronicles, ponder these two questions:

1 - What stories need faithful and imaginative retelling in your life and in the life of your congregation?

2 - What are hope-filled possibilities to be found in such retelling?

May God bless you, and I will see you next week on the Biblical Wild.