

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan

THE BIBLICAL WILD

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WEEK I: Genesis 1-15, Psalms 1-5

From Psalm 5 let us pray: Give ear to my words, O LORD, give heed to my sigh. Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray. O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you. AMEN.

Hi! I'm Todd Ousley, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan. I am here at Dawn of a New Day Coffeehouse in Downtown Saginaw to inaugurate a study and devotional series on Holy Scriptures; *The Biblical Wild: Pioneers in the Christian Wilderness*.

But why this particular scripture study? Why are we doing this? Over the course of generations, as a church and as in fact I believe a Christian faith, we have lost touch with the foundational scriptures. We know bits and pieces of the story and in particular we know stories about Jesus but we're not quite sure what scriptures informed Jesus. What shaped him into the person, the rabbi, the prophet, the savior that we know.

The church finds it increasingly difficult to respond to the culture as we know it today. And so it's important for us to go back to the foundational basis of scripture to immerse ourselves. We've got to move from our comfort zones out into the wilderness, into the biblical wild, to be pioneers on the frontier - who aren't sure exactly what tomorrow brings - but knowing we are armed with our Christian faith, we are equipped with the foundations that our ancestors gave to us and we know that throughout all of it as we journey, that God is most certainly with us and that God's steadfast love will sustain us.

Holy scripture is a story of God's encounters with humankind and humankind's encounters with God and with one another. It's really like a group of friends or relatives gathering around a campfire or, as it is for me, sitting here with a cup of coffee.

That very first word Genesis 1:1 we read, "When God began to create the heavens and the earth..." and so we get a clue that this is going to be a story about how things began and how things came to be. But then in the second chapter of Genesis we move to a different story of creation one that is complementary or comes from a different angle to describe our relationship with all of creation. And in this the central aspect of the story is the creation of humanity from the soil of the earth but what's important in this beginning part of holy scripture is that there is a key connection between who we are and who we are called to be by God and the very soil, the very ground, upon which we walk and in which we toil.

From the very beginning God is interested in being in relationship with us. God creates humanity so that God might have companion. God creates companion for one part of humanity with another part. And companionship with the animals and companionship within the Garden of Eden. God makes promises to us and we fail to keep those promises and so we get early shades of an understanding that part of this grand story is going to be about promises made and promises broken.

After the stories of creation the stories of temptation and the stories of the garden of delight and Adam and Eve's banishment from the garden we rush headlong thru stories of the birth of Cain and Able, in a difficult relationship as brothers, of Cane murdering his brother Able to Noah and the Ark and God's frustration with creation a decision to destroy creation but to save enough of it to continue the promises into the future. Of the tower of Babel and once again the human hubris of believing that they can be equal to God. And finally we end these chapters with the introduction of Abram and Sarai who will become Abraham and Sarah, one story where a more formalized covenant is made - a covenant that is a promise of multiple generations that will populate the earth. And of a particular land, a particular place, a particular "adamah" or ground - the soil that will be given to them, the first of the important covenants, and lasting covenants that God will make with his beloved humanity and all of creation.

I wonder: What are the covenants that you have in your life? How have you kept those and how have you failed to keep them? What does it take to remake covenant? And in particular of interest to me, is that connection between the promises we have made and the promises that God has made to us and our call our vocation what it is that God calls us into. What is the connection between that vocation and the particular ground on which we walk? The ground of our being the ground that gives life and animation to us. What is the connection between your vocation and your location? May God bless you in this next week. See you again next Thursday.