

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan

THE BIBLICAL WILD

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WEEK XII: Josua 1-18 / Psalms 65-70

From Psalm 67, let us pray.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, oh God, let all the peoples praise you. Amen.

I'm Todd Ousley, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan. And this is the Biblical Wild: Pioneers in the Christian Wilderness.

This week, as we move from the book of Deuteronomy to the book of Joshua, we leave behind those years of wandering around in the wilderness, waiting expectantly to arrive into the promised land that God has promised to Abraham and his ancestors that follow.

Let's hear the witness of holy scripture from the book of Joshua.

[He reads Joshua 1: 1-6]

This movement across the river Jordan into the Promised Land is not just a move from anticipation of occupation and actual possession of the land. It's a shift of recognizing that dreams that have been dreamt for generations are about to be realized. But along with the realization of those dreams comes responsibility.

It reminds me of the experience of being excited about owning my first home only to discover that the wiring needed a little bit of work and that there was some rot in the boards and sometimes possessing the dream is not all that it's cracked up to be. A moment that is pivotal in this shift for the Israelites comes in Joshua 5: 12.

[He reads Joshua 5: 12]

As long as the people of Israel could rely upon Yahweh's gracious provision of manna in the wilderness, then they didn't have to take full responsibility for their lives and full responsibility for the provision of their own welfare. But this movement across the Jordan into the promised land as scripture tells us means that, no longer does God provide their daily bread their manna in the wilderness, but rather they must work the land themselves and learn how to bring sustenance from the land in ways that they haven't for a generation. It puts the people in a point where they must grow up, take responsibility. They must move out of their childhood or adolescence and into a time of adulthood and taking full responsibility in partnership with God for their lives.

Their leader, Joshua is between a rock and a hard place. He has to decide: do they actually take on responsibility for their lives and for this emerging nation or do they continue to rely fully upon God expecting that God will provide their daily bread. Joshua ultimately decides along

with the rest of the leadership to cross over the river to take possession of the land. And to move into adulthood, a more mature responsibility for their lives as people of faith.

It wasn't peaceful in the beginning but was rather a series of conquests, as scripture tells us. It's not so much just a series of pitched battles or inching their way forward with conquests. But it's about developing relationships with one another about discovering new ways of relating. About discovering a new way of being the chosen people of God.

In preparation for the questions this week, I want to go back and read one small portion of the opening chapter of the book of Joshua.

[He reads Joshua 1: 7]

I have two questions for you this week.

How do you understand the connection between God's faithfulness and your obedience?

And secondly like the Israelites crossing into the promised land taking greater responsibility for their own lives and their own faithfulness: How are you called to mature and deepen your faith?

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