

THE BIBLICAL WILD

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WEEK X: Deuteronomy 1-18 / Psalms 53-58

From Psalm 57, let us pray.

Be merciful to me, oh God, be merciful to me. For in you my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge until the destroying storms pass by. I cry to God most high to God who fulfills his purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me. He will put to shame those who trample on me. God will send forth his steadfast love and his faithfulness. Amen.

I'm Todd Ousley, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan and this is the Biblical Wild: Pioneers in the Christian Wilderness. Let's get started this week on our journey in Deuteronomy.

The book of Deuteronomy is a book that concerns itself with a number of theological issues but a primary framework for examining the whole book and understanding it's context, or it's content, is to look at it's relationship to the land.

Two different relationships to the land are present. The first is an Abrahamic or nomadic understanding of the land where there's a connection but there is constant movement and discovery of new relationships and new places. The second understanding is deuteronomic, which is a hard word to say. One that finds yourself in more of a single location. And so we see the interplay between these two kinds of understandings.

When I look at my own life and try to make connections between holy scripture and the experiences I have had, Deuteronomy is an important book. My own family has lived its life and indeed much of my life has been lived in a way that we have a deep connection to place to the land - being owners of land in east Texas and being very proud that we spring from that soil. Also being people that are transferred around as I spent the first 40 years of my life never living in one place for more than 4 years. So we understood that nomadic existence. But there was an invitation when we came to the Diocese of Eastern Michigan that we would have an opportunity, at least the possibility, of moving from a more nomadic existence to one that is more like a deuteronomic understanding of actually occupying the land for awhile.

When I became bishop in 2006 we realized we would have to shift our understanding of our relationship to the land. We were going to be in a house that we would likely finish that last 30 year payment on. To shift from being nomadic to being occupiers of the land is a part of the spiritual journey that all of us undertake. It may not be literally related to the land but we are called at different points in our spiritual journey to be ready to pack up and go on a moments notice. To pack up the tent and load up the camels and take off across the desert as it were. And then there are those times in our lives where we are called into a ministry, a particular vocation, which invites us to stay put awhile. To settle into the land and to understand our vocation as connected to that particular location.

That tension between a nomadic existence and a more settled existence is one that can shift back and forth from moment to moment and time to time.

There are a couple of questions that I think are worth considering this week.

The first is, how has your life and your spiritual journey been nomadic?

The second question is, when have you experienced a more settledness along your journey? Or a life on the border anticipating a settledness?

I look forward to seeing you next week as we continue our journey and study into the book of Deuteronomy.

God Bless