

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan

THE BIBLICAL WILD

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WEEK XX: II Kings 16 – I Chronicles 4-6 /
Psalm 116

From Psalm 113. Let us pray.

Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord; praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Amen.

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

Last week we did a bit of skimming the surface of I and II Kings to uncover a couple of the interpretive theological frameworks that give us insight into the purpose of these two books of the Holy Scripture. This week we conclude our consideration of I and II Kings, by looking at a third interpretive lens. The tension between prophetic utterances of judgement that ultimately come to pass, and an uncharacteristically undeuteronomic divine for variance for divine judgement is remarkably delayed. What is revealed is a kind of creative and interpretive tension present in an understanding of God's word that is always present in the whole of Israel's history, but is present in a kind of capacity. As law which comes as judging and destroying, and as gospel, as good muse that is saving and forgiving. In the end in 587 BCE the prophetic judgements prevailed, and destruction did come to Jerusalem, but in II Kings 25: 27-30 there is an open ended and surprising act of hope. In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison; he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the other seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes. Every day of his life he dined regularly in the king's presence. For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion every day, as long as he lived. The tension between destruction and sustaining grace is an instructive tension to consider both in our individual lives and the lives of our congregation. God always promises to be faithful to us, and asks for our obedience in return. We know well that in the midst of our obedience we can experience loss that feels destructive, while also maintaining hope in God's promises. When we unexpectedly loose a loved one at an early age, or in tragic circumstances, when we experience the negative effects of a destructive life choice, or when we can't seem to catch a break, we often cry to God "why me?" But in that struggle to understand, we can reimagine and we can reinterpret so that we see that God sustains us with grace, even in the midst of difficult times. When we turn to congregational life, reimagining our past and reinterpreting for the future can be a way of understanding both how we got into our current predicament and how we might find the grace to see our way through it, and into a time of hope and promise. The key it seems, Holy Scripture tells us, is to embrace both sides of the equation, how we got into this mess, accepting responsibility and a sense of judgement and the promise that God will be graciously present with us, even in our darkest moments, beckoning us towards a future of hope and possibility. As you encounter the scripture this week, I invite you to ponder a couple questions. In that, recall a moment of both judgement and grace and ask yourself:

1. How did you experience God's presence or absence?

2. How did this experience inform the direction of your life? Your congregation's life?

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