

The Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan

THE BIBLICAL WILD

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WEEK XV: I Samuel 7-9 / Psalm 87

From Psalm 84 let us pray.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God. Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Amen.

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

Taken together I and II Samuel give an account of a transition from a tribal society to a monarchical society. A transition from a society beset by anarchy and barbarism to one characterized by bureaucratic self-aggrandizement.

Here we have the story of Samuel, the judge who occupies a place of authority among the tribes of Israel. But he becomes inundated by calls for a king. He resists those calls, trying to keep the current form of government in place. But the calls increase calls increasing for a king a singular authority. But Samuel receives a word from the Lord who reminds Samuel that God is indeed in charge and that Samuel needs to go back to the people and tell them that there will be a judge and there will be no king. Because the people seem to have lost sight that God or Yaweh is in fact the king over all. But the people persist. And Samuel once again confers with God who relents this time and says "okay we'll appoint a king." Samuel anoints Saul of the tribe of Benjamin and he ultimately becomes king. The narrative continues with court intrigue and jealousy in the emergence of Saul's son Jonathan to become the assumed heir. A natural progression of things that we would expect in a monarchy. But also emerging to give more intrigue and excitement to the story is David a young shepherd boy who will become the king in fact in the successor to Saul. All of our hopes for the future appears to be pointed toward David. Hopes of a continuing line of a strengthening monarchy of an assured place of the people of Israel within this society. A settled place once again. So not only does this extended narrative give an account of Israel's memory of the transition from a tribal society into a more tightly organized bureaucratic monarchical society. It reminds us of a continuing tension that we have between the steadfast love and faithfulness of Yaweh and the imperfect reflection of God's love by the people of God. We also see the emergence of a deep longing for one who is a more accessible presence an anointed one a king, a messiah, a deliverer who will deliver the people from chaos and bring them into safety.

We'll end the story there this week and we will point toward next week, where the story will continue and we will see the saga with David the king and the shift from a tribal society into a monarchical one continues.

A popular hymn has the line "all our hope on God is founded."

In what ways to you place all your hope on God?

And in what ways do you place your hope elsewhere?

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