

Session One: The Word

Words are so powerful; they should only be used to heal...to bless....to prosper.

Words have an effect on us.

The Bible is the Word of God as it does things to us. The power of the Bible is that it helps us see God and what he is doing and that he loves us. The Bible is not God: it is not an end in itself. It points the way to God. Luther stated that the Bible “is the cradle in which the Christ child lays.” The word helps us to experience Jesus Christ.

History of the Bible

Oral Tradition

1000 BC: First writings

E tradition: Prophetic, northern, God speaks to us, faith

J tradition: Kingly, southern, God speaks to the world, land

D tradition: Legalism, the law

P tradition: Priestly, Temple, Holiness is the key

400 BC: Old Testament is gathered together

Jesus stories told for 30 years before they were written down.

55 AD: Paul’s first letters

65 AD: First Gospel—Mark

100 AD: Last book—Revelations

Other books were not included.

Canon is established about 200.

Greek – Latin – Luther to German – King James around 1650

By studying the history of the Bible and how it came together we learn that there was dialogue going on within the Bible. Those who brought the books together preserved a rich tradition from many sources that dealt with many issues: What is the nature of human kind? Why are we here? How do we relate to the world out there?

For example, when it came to kings, the prophetic tradition from the northern tribes warned about the danger of kings while the authors from the time of David talked about the benefits of having a faithful king.

Or, there was a debate throughout scripture about the whether Israel should be a light to the world (be evangelical) or build the walls higher (keep your self holy) around Jerusalem to keep the Gentiles, the others, out. Who is holy and who is not? Who is an “innie” and who is an “outie”. Both traditions were placed within the scriptures to frame an on going debate. This created a tension, a paradox, and the people of God had to struggle. Faith came from that search.

When you read the Bible, it helps to know these traditions and the sense of the struggle going on.

Word of God in the Bible

Genesis: Word creates (see John 1)

Deuteronomy: Word as Law

Psalms: Word as Light

God is present in his Word

Experience with the Word: God speaks to us in the Word. The passage has meaning both within its historical context and the effect it has on you.

As you read a text, ask yourself three questions:

What sticks out for me?

What does this say to me; what does this mean to me?

What does it mean for the world?

Genesis

Creation

Origins of Sin (Free but Limited)

Assignment for Sept. 30: Read Genesis 12-25 (the Abraham stories)