

First Sermon on Exodus.

If Exodus were a play it would have three acts. In the first act God takes his people out of Egypt. In the second act God dwells with the people in the Wilderness. In the third act God prepares the people for living in the Promised Land. The second and third acts overlap and extend beyond this play into the next three books of the Bible.

God is clearly the most important and powerful character. In the course of the three acts there are some amazing events. These include the following: the birth of Moses, the calling of Moses and the giving of God's Holy Name YHWH, the plagues on Egypt, the Passover, the pillaging of the Egyptians., the parting of the Red/Reed Sea, God's appearance on Mt. Sinai, the giving of the Decalogue and other commandments, the "Mooning" of Moses, the worship of the golden calf, and at great length the establishment of the Cult complete with plans for an elaborate and expensive temple with its altars etc.

All of these events are not in our Lectionary.

Both the geography and the time is rather slippery in this play. For example Sinai/Horeb has two different names and Moses seems to slide up and down the mountain on his visits to God.

Exodus certainly has a grounding in events in history, but what is staged in this play is not history; it is theology. Exodus answers the questions, who is God?, Who are we?, and what is the relationship between God and human beings?

Reading the text (or watching the play) raises other questions we might want to discuss in the coming months.

Is God's name really a verb? Why does God control Pharaoh? If God commands us not to oppress a resident Alien, why does he tell the Israelites to kill all the inhabitants of Canaan? Did they really build that Temple in the wilderness?

See how much fun we can have with the Bible?

In the theatre we talk about the through line of action in a play. It is the arc of meaning described by what happens from the beginning to the end of the play.

The through line in Exodus is a movement out of slavery into freedom; It is an escape from a domineering culture into a wilderness where we can more easily find and be found by God. Exodus is about the escape from a present dysfunctional culture into a place where we can find out who and whose we really are in preparation for a promised new life.

Walter Duggins Moore et al., in "An Other Kingdom," describe an imperial, consumer driven culture from which we should go into a culture more closely reflecting Progressive values.

In "The Benedict Option," Rob Dreher describes a similar departure into the wilderness of a purer church; although his problem with our current culture is mainly about sex.

These two books might help us in our discussion this year.

The movement of Exodus is out of where we are into something simpler, but perhaps more fearful; the wilderness is a place to get to know what the church is really about, who this God is so that we can then proceed into a new culture knowing better what we are about.

In the play Exodus, we are all actors. This. A story about God and about us..

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