

Pastor's Class
March 4 & 7, 2010
Opening Your Bible: How to Read Scripture with a Historical Focus
Rev. Dr. Arthur Bergren

Welcome/Prayer

Last Time: Lectio Divina – Latin for sacred reading
Method developed during early Church 100-450 ad
4 Steps
Step One: Lectio – reading/listening to the text
Step Two: Meditatio – meditating/reflecting/ruminating on the text
Step Three: Oratio – responding with prayer
Step Four: Contemplatio – contemplative prayer

History

Acknowledgment that the Bible is an ancient text
Biblical Texts are shaped by these people, places and times
More we understand of their world view, the deeper insights we can have
Profound need to understand those times
 Old Testament
 New Testament
Only by understanding their times, can we apply the text to our times

Historical Readings

Answers the questions of who, what, why and where
Focus on the plain meaning of the text

Key Questions

What do we know about the author, about who wrote the passage?
Do we know to or for whom this passage was written?
Why was this text written or what situation is being addressed?
When was this text written and what do we know about that period of history?
Where was this text written and what do we know about that part of the
 ancient world?
What implied political and social realities could shed light on this text?
How is this text similar to other ancient stories or texts that might shed light
 on its meaning?
What things do we know about the ancient world that might help us to read
 and understand this text?

Old Testament

Very Careful passing on of the Jewish Tradition
2 Kings 22-23, 2 Chronicles 34: Mention of a Book
Date 621 BC during King Josiah
Torah: 400 BC
Prophets: 400 BC
Hymns/History: On Going to New Testament Period
90 AD After the Destruction of the Temple
2nd Esdras 14:44-46

Context

Reformation: Going Back to Roots
Retention of Identity: Never forget
Babylonian Exile and Restoration: How do we understand?
Coming Messiah: Restoration of David's Line

New Testament

New Church: 1 Church loosely associated
Two fold pattern
Bishops/Presbyters: Teachers, Preachers
Deacons: Management, Social Ministry
Church begins to slowly define itself
Oral Tradition
Passing of the story verbally
Expectation of Jesus' return
1 Generation passed away drive to preserve the stories
Point of Conflict: Middle 2nd Century
Marcion: God of Old Testament was evil
Only God of Jesus was good
Only recognized a few books of the Bible
Declared a heretic by the church - lead to conversation about the canon
Criteria for the New Testament Canon was developed
APOSTOLIC written by an apostle
CATHOLIC relevant to the entire church
ORTHODOX did not contradict church's teaching
TRADITIONAL USE used from the earliest days of the church
Inspiration was not a criterion
3 and 4th Century
Eusebius of Caesarea
Agreement on the books of the New Testament
Athanasius: Bishop of Alexandria
First to publish a list of the accepted books in New Testament

Matthew 21:23–32

When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.

Historical Reading

Matthew's Context

Intended Recipient of Jesus' Words

Authority Issue

Historical Reading Tips

Ask the historical question: Who, What, Why and Where

Office of Pastor: That's what we do!

Use Good Resources: Study Bible and Library

Keep digging: Plain Meaning of Text

Questions

Next Time:

March 11 & 14

Opening Your Bible: How to Read Scripture from a Literary Focus