

Separation and Return: How Grace is Found in Sharing our Story with One Another and Connecting it to Scripture

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Recap from Last Week Recording and Outlines also posted online

Narrative story telling as a means of reengaging with one another and connecting our experience with the narratives of scripture.

The Road to Emmaus

- How events of trauma affect both individuals and communities and make meaning of their worlds after such events-what does the Christian story tell us about this?
- Threatened with annihilation, not just physical, you sense of self, your way of life, what you thought you could count on
- Feeling of helplessness
- Numbing out
- Information comes in too quickly to be processed
- The church is called in the space of trauma to engaged in the crucial task of reordering the collective imagination of its people and be wise and passionate in this
- Is this satisfying? Wouldn't we rather "do" something

Emmaus

- They are too disordered to recognize him
- He accompanies them, listening
- Jesus come to them
- They don't have to figure out how to get to him
- When he does speak, he intervenes and says they are "Foolish"
- He reconstructs their account of his death and continued life by first interpreting for them "Moses and the Prophets"
- He rendered them by pulling it into the bigger story of the people of God
- Still don't recognize him
- They are interested enough though that they don't let him "go on ahead"
- Gather for a meal, he takes blesses and breaks the bread and gives it to them
- Memory is sparked- a lost truth recalled-suddenly their eyes are opened and they recognize him
- Recognition comes in waves
- Belief and horror stand together
- Don't regain previous state of innocence
- Grace is "haunted" by the ghost of the violence it addresses
- Peace be with you

The Psalms as Bearing Witness

- Calvin called the bible “a lens which we put-on” and through which we look at the world.
- It is a world we are invited to stand within and to inhabit as our own
- In his introduction to his commentary on the Psalms he shares a bit of his biography. Young and restless scholar in Paris in the mid1500s, he was suddenly on the wrong end of cycle war and had to flee his French homeland, barely escaping imprisonment and execution.
- Finds himself in a German town and asked to minister to a community of other French exiles.
- Consolation in the psalms
- “Undone selves”
- Judith Herman “Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion. When trust is lost, traumatized people feel that they belong more to the dead than the living.”
- Psalms as a “full anatomy of all parts of the soul”
- “There is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror” The Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life of all the griefs, sorrow, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities”
- It is certainly a rear and singular advantage, when all lurking places are discovered, and the heart is brought into the light, purged from that most baneful infection, hypocrisy
- Calvin offers no trivial answers, no easy fixes, no abstract platitudes
- Does not glorify their suffering or suggest that their mental anguish is a test designed by God to measure the depth of their piety.
- Rather he enters into the depth of their suffering not to explain “why” but to offer them a practice to hold their suffering.
- The practice is that of prayer, we testify and God bears witness
- Transformation of imagination happens when we lift up our groaning to the Divine
- Healing as a three stage process
 - Establishment of safety
 - Remembrance and mourning
 - Reconnection with ordinary life
- Dynamic conversation taking place between a testifier and a witness
- The survivor gives voice to what was previously unspeakable
- The receiver confirms the voice has been heard and that it no longer needs to be hidden in the dark corner of the soul
- Pulled into the light of day and affirmed as a reality worthy of sustained lamentation and possible redress
- When one dares to lift up to God the most painful and often unseemly torments of one’s soul, one tests to God. God is the witness and affirms the reality of our suffering
- Our story changes in this divine exchange and is pulled into and redeemed into part of the divine story