

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

"Liberation, Formation, and Confederation"

Exodus 6:1-9, 14:10-14 (Covenant reaffirmed and promise of deliverance)

Exodus 20:1-21 (Decalogue, beginning of formation of shared law, destiny)

Deuteronomy 34:1-9 (Death of Moses and leadership of Joshua)

Joshua 24:14-24 (Covenant at Shechem)

Judges 2:11-19 (Pattern of decline as summarized in Judges)

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- Read the story of Moses' surprising call from God at the bush that seemed to burn but not be consumed by fire (Exodus 3). Notice that Moses is no pushover when it comes to God's call on his life. He tries a number of arguments to convince God that he is not the man for the job. List these. Have you ever felt called by God to do something and resisted? Why do you think Moses was reluctant to obey God?
- Think about and discuss what YHWH might mean in the context of the nature of God.
- Read Exodus 21:12-35 to get a sense of the details that were covered by the law. What do you think about the law of capital punishment for children who curse their parents? Or the lack of penalty for beating a slave if he doesn't die within two days? Or the many variations of ox gore accidents?
- Think about what liturgical architecture says about theology. What does it mean that the Tabernacle is moveable? What does it mean that God says to place it "in the midst" of the people in their camp, with three tribes each on the four sides? What does St. Luke's architecture say about our theology of God? Think of the sanctuary's style, the placement of furniture, musical instruments, and seating. What does it say that the windows are clear, etc.?
- Think about how we remember and memorialize important events in our national history. How do we remember those events in our lives as congregations, and how do you do it for your own personal events? How does the discipline of remembering empower faith?
- Read Joshua 24:16-22. The leaders tell Joshua that they want to serve Yahweh, but then Joshua tells them that they will not be able to do that because they will forsake the LORD and follow after foreign gods. The people insist that they indeed will remain faithful to Yahweh. This is going to be an ongoing example of a time when "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The people will forsake the LORD, and it will lead to their destruction. When have you experienced truly wanting to serve God or alter your life, but found that keeping that promise or intention was very difficult?
- Read Judges 2:11-23. Notice that every time the people repent and turn away from the foreign gods and back to Yahweh, that God raises up a judge. And the people have peace and prosperity as long as the judge is alive. What happens when the judge dies?
- Think about how often in our own country we think the answer to our problems is to be found in elections and a change in national or local political leadership. Has that ever really been the answer? Change begins in us, not outside of us.