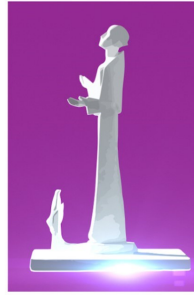


EXPLORING THE BIBLE

a St Francis College short course



Theme 2: How to approach the Bible

2d: How should we read the Bible?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. If we choose to read the Bible sacramentally as Greg suggests, what might that mean for our reading habits? Our attitudes in reading, or our expectations for what we might discover?
2. How might reading sacramentally influence our acceptance of what we DO discover?
3. If this is something you'd like to do, perhaps use a journal to plan your reading times and reflections from the process.
4. In our BIBLE360 Intro to the Bible seminar, we talk about the '3 Worlds of the Bible' approach: The world OF the text, the world BEHIND the text and the world IN FRONT of the text. If that intrigues you, do some research and see what you can find out.

TRANSCRIPT

The Very Rev'd Dr Greg Jenks

Dean, Grafton Cathedral

I like to think of the Scriptures as a kind of a sacrament, sacramental. By this I mean something of this world, a text, which humans have created through a process, using human technology and assets to create this sacred literature. But when we're using sacred literature, it's also being used by God to bless, to communicate as a moment of grace.

Now for example, someone can come up for communion and have very little formal theological sense of the significance of the eucharist. But the imagery of coming to the table and receiving some of the food that's on the table and being able to drink from the cup invokes primal imagery. People are touched by it and God is at work. They don't have to have a properly developed eucharistic theology in order to be blessed by participating. Otherwise we'll all be in trouble except for one or two people in the world who think they've got it sorted out.

I have a similar approach to scripture. If we're approaching Scripture with an attitude of openness and trust and anticipating God is going to be loving and gracious and good for us, then the Scriptures are going to be an encounter of grace. Equally we don't have to have a good grasp of the history, a good grasp of the compositional process by which the books were written, the canonical process by which they become authoritative. Some of that 2000 years of translation and theological debate is useful to have, but it's like an art critic, who will get more out of going to an art gallery than someone who doesn't have that art training.

Similarly, we can all use Scripture. We can all misuse the scripture as well, but we can all use the Scriptures with an openness and a naive expectation that I'm going to read this book and I expect this God is going to have something to say to me. Of course, we can also come to the book saying, "Now I can see that Paul is really dealing with a problematic issue with the church in Corinth". In that way we have a more nuanced way of engaging with Scripture. Sometimes, despite our much-vaunted theological training, something hits us totally out of left field. That's the nature of Scripture and the nature of the God who speaks through Scripture. So, for me it's more about using scripture as a sacramental and spiritual process rather than an argumentative or a legalistic, interpretive process.