

## **Why do we read the Bible in Church?**

This month, we begin a reflection from a book entitled, *Introducing the Lessons of the Church Year* by Frederick Hook Borsch. His book speaks about different aspects of how the Bible is relevant to understanding what is the purpose of the church.

You can image coming to church as if you were meeting a friend. There, we bring up stories from the past that remind us of our relationship. The highs and the lows, but more importantly, it is at these gatherings that we establish our sense of connection with one another. It's making community. It's recalling common stories around a dinner table, or during a holiday with family we haven't seen in a while. There are times when the family wants to trace their roots deeper and learn more about their past. Such narratives provide threads of continuity, order and belonging.

At church and through the scriptures, customs, symbols and rituals arise out of the stories, and we welcome people into these new and familiar connections.

Wherever we go on our travels around the world and enter into church, you can meet with people who have the same connections, bonds and stories, because of our connection with liturgy, the Book of Common Prayer and the Bible stories. Additionally, whatever language people speak, they are all connected with the common language of the Bible. Especially in the Gospel readings, Christians of different centuries draw upon the same stock of adventures, prophecies, songs, commandments, visions and parables.

By word of mouth, stories of the remembrance of exodus and Moses, and the narrative of the child's humble birth shape the community of believers from one generation to the next. When we read the scriptures together, they come alive.

When we read them together, just like friends reminiscing times together, our stories become touchstones to help us interpret and understand our present experiences.

As Christianity began to spread and as a variety of new documents were written—some claiming divine inspiration, it became evident that there had to be a limit or rule. This came to be called the canons of agreed-upon scriptural writings. The Gospels, letters, prophecies, psalms, wisdom books and histories within this canon were felt to have the breadth, authenticity and depth necessary to cover and to preserve the foundational experiences of Christianity and of Judaism on which it is based.

These biblical narratives are what we might call the “master” stories of the Christian faith. When we hear them with new ears, they are meant to offer experiences which the total community can in some sense relive. Each week, each day, when we read scripture, the Bible stories and contexts guides the interpretation of our lives and inspire the formation of new stories of grace and courageous belief.

Next time you hear the lectionary read, imagine the universal message of meaning that comes from God and be mindful of its contemporary relevance. If you wish to gain more in depth learning, the book is available on Amazon.

Happy learning,

Father Joshua+