

So many times, when I'm talking with other pastors, I ask them about how often they preach from the old testament. It's a great discussion, because the answers are so wide spread. Different denominations would understandably have different ideas about how much the old testament should be preached, but even within denominations the views might not be the same.

Some of the older faiths tell me that they all preach from the old testament, because it is part of their lectionary series. For those who don't know, the revised common lectionary series has an old testament, psalm, new testament, and gospel reading. Some weeks it has a second old testament and another psalm reading, or it might have an alternate new testament reading. When they tell me that, I say that's fine, but simply because you read a lesson doesn't mean that you preach that lesson.

They tell me that they don't worry about the old testament stories as much because they are covered in Sunday school, confirmation, catechism, etc. I agree that most people will be able to give you a pop culture reference to a number of stories in the old testament like, Genesis, David and Goliath, or Jonah and the whale. But what do they know about Ruth, Ester, or Job? What can they tell us about Proverbs or Bel and the Dragon?

A couple of nondenominational preachers I know tell me that they don't bother preaching from the old testament because they aren't Jews. The old testament only relates to the Jewish faith so they only preach from the new testament. So, everything before Jesus doesn't really matter, so we ignore it is basically what I'm hearing them say.

A few of the UCC pastors have told me that they switched to the narrative lectionary series because their congregations do not agree with the old testament. That lectionary series doesn't start discussing the new testament until Advent and ends around pentecost. And that is why I ask how much they preach from the old testament. If we spend all of our time only talking about Jesus, we can lose sight of the history and forget about how we made our covenant with God and brought us to where we are today.

Over the past few weeks, we've been revisiting the old testament. And we haven't necessarily been reading the traditional versions of the scripture. We read Genesis 2 which presented Creation differently than Genesis. We read about the 10 commandments from Moses' sermon in Deuteronomy when he was talking to the descendants of those who witnessed God as the fiery pillar and smoke on Mount Sinai and gave them the 10 commandments in Exodus. And today we are reading about King David.

In Sunday school this morning, we talked about the story of David and Goliath. Our older students knew the story and told it to our younger students. Then we talked about why this story was important. What can they learn from it? We talked about how big David was and how his faith in God protected him.. We talked about how someone so small could do so many great things and that size doesn't really matter.

Our faith in your power and your providence, O God, is strengthened today in our reflection upon the experience of David in his encounter with the giant Goliath. You remind us that there is nothing in all creation that is more powerful than your word in all its two-edged glory. By it Jesus calmed the storm; by it he healed and made people whole—and by it we too are sustained from day to day and from minute to minute. Help us, O God, to cling to your living word—and to root ourselves in it—that we may be a people who overcome all the trials and tribulations that come upon us. Lord hear our prayer....

We are reminded today, O God, of how the strong can be defeated by the weak, of how the exalted and the mighty can be overcome by those who are humble and lowly—and we thank you for this. We pray, O God, for all those today who are oppressed, as Israel was oppressed in Egypt, we pray for those who must contend with forces greater than they—grant them faith and in faith, grant them courage; act for them, and in them, to bring about their liberation. Lord hear our prayer....

We pray today, O God for all those who live in fear and insecurity—for those who need encouragement, for those who need our help and the help of their neighbors and their communities if they are to know life in its fullness. Lord, hear our prayer...

Patient God, we confess that we love a parade. We are very happy to see banners waving and hear people shouting their praises. Our hearts thrill to the spectacle. But we fail to see the sadness on the face of the Savior; our shouts block out his sorrow. He comes to us as King, and we expect that royal treatment will follow. We do not and cannot believe that in a few days we will be among those who will turn our backs and run from his presence. How fickle we are, O Lord. Yet you continually forgive us and call us to turn our lives around--to see the needs of others, to reach out in trust and faith, to be willing to witness to your good news of saving love. Heal our hearts and give us courage for the days ahead; for we ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.