

Sunday October 26, 2025
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost – Proper 25

Sermon: “Godstory”

169 years! That is a lot of history. This congregation has seen a lot over the years. Since its inception, the congregation has witnessed the confederation of Canada, the First and Second World Wars, the Spanish Flu epidemic, the formation of The United Church of Canada, the Great Depression, the development of antibiotics, plastic surgery, nuclear weapons and computers, the lunar landing, the International Space Station, microelectronics, the dot com bubble, a new millenium, smart phones, the mortgage crisis, and covid 19, just to name a few. And that is only the history that the congregation has lived through and not the history of the congregation itself.

It has been said that it is the winner who gets to write history. When I was a schoolchild the history that was taught was British history, and the history of early Canada, all told from the perspective of those who invaded and occupied North America. We learned nothing of the history of those who were already here. They didn't matter. Their history didn't matter, because they were the losers and not the winners.

When I was in seminary I learned a new word – ‘herstory.’ You see, history is very often the story of men, and not women. Herstory is a purposeful focus on the story from the perspective of women. And it is long overdue. If you have read the Bible, you will be quite familiar with story after story of men, and if there are any women at all, they are almost always unnamed. Was it an intentional effort to dismiss women, did it just not occur to the author that women were people too, or was it because it was written in the context of a patriarchal society?

I recently read an article that talked about history being a Spiritual Practice. I'd never thought of history being a spiritual practice before. The article said, “History is not something you can point to – it exists between the realms of what really was, what we think we know about the past, and our own capacity to enter into and imagine other times, cultures, and lives.” The history I

learned in public school certainly told only one side of the story of the occupation and settling of North America. The real story lies somewhere between what I learned, and the story of that time that the indigenous population is familiar with. The real story exists between different versions of the story.

Thinking about history this way involves the intellect, intuition, and imagination. That is, it involves the study of all available information about the time and place, the capacity to interpret the information gleaned, and both imagination and empathy – the ability to put one's self into another's shoes, into another's time, into another's culture. Now that sounds like exactly the kind of thing required when reading the Bible.

The Bible was written in a specific context, at a specific time, within a specific cultural context. When we read it now, over two thousand years after it was written, and in the context of North America's materialistic culture it is difficult to escape our context and read the text as it was written to be read at that time. Like history, understanding the Bible as it was written involves study, interpretation and imagination and because it involves all three, our understanding of the Bible, like history, always changes.

Many in our time read the Bible from our context, especially the book of Revelation. It was written by John while he was exiled on the island of Patmos. It was written in coded language that used metaphor and even fantasy to speak about the great evil of the time, the Roman Empire, and about its eventual downfall. Many evangelicals in our time read it as a roadmap to what is going to happen in the twenty-first century. As soon as the Palestinians are removed from Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem, and the land of Israel is restored, they believe the Messiah will return, so, let's hurry up and force the second coming with all due haste.

The Bible is not a recording of things as they happened, written down by the reporter on the scene as events unfolded. It is a record that looks backward. It was written after the fact by people who were trying to discern when and

where and how God had acted in their lives and intervened in events to either reward or punish them. The one thing about the Bible is that it always assumes that God has acted, or been silent, that God will always be with and for God's Creation – faithful and faithless people included, and that God has an objective, an end in mind – the kingdom of God, Jesus called it.

We all remember our experiences within this congregation – we know the information. What I'd like you to do is to practice the use of your intuition and imagination. The Bible has been codified, but the story is still being written. What I'd like to learn from you is this - for as long as you have been a part of this worshipping community, for as long as you have been a member of the Body of Christ, where can you discern God's speaking or acting, or not, in your life together? When has God been especially present to this congregation? What times and events felt especially sacred? When did it feel like God was absent or even punishing you?

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Remember I talked about that new term 'herstory' – the attempt to view things from the female perspective rather than the male perspective? The Bible is the story of a people and their relationship with God. What if we thought about it the other way around. What if we thought about the story from God's perspective, about God's relationship with Creation and with humankind – you know, 'Godstory.' I have a hunch, intuition I'll call it, that if we can use our imaginations to see the world from God's perspective, and our empathy in responding to what we see, the kingdom of God will get a lot closer. May it be so. Amen.