

My Opener for Book Study at St David's,  
October 3, 2016

I thought about this opener a lot this week. Last week Ken gave us a wonderfully scholarly synopsis of the last two books we did in book study last semester.

My opener is going to use my favorite 'medium is the message' and that's a bit of humour. I'm also going to surprise my husband Pat by coming in under the allotted 5 minutes!

I thought I would start with a little story from "Humorous short stories about Sunday school" by Todd Houck. This one is about little Joey and Moses. Nine-year-old Joey was asked by his mother what he learned in Sunday school "well mom our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea he had his army build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then he radioed

headquarters for reinforcements. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved!" "Now Joey, is that really what your Sunday school teacher taught you? his mother asked? "Well no mom but if I told you the story way the teacher did you'd never believe it!"

I was thinking about our discussions over the last two weeks and the chapters from the Spong book and remembering Sunday school teachers that I've had over the years, committed lovely women who made a kind and loving place to make the old stories come alive. I actually searched in my old Bible that my grandmother gave me and sure enough there's a little card from Miss Leyland and Miss Irwin from grade 5 Sunday School (we called them "Miss" back then) and there in my Bible was a little crocheted cross that one of my teachers gave me I think when I was in grade 6.

And I remember the Bible stories learning them and looking at the pictures especially the

pictures like Moses parting the Red Sea and all those soldiers getting drowned. Burning bushes, walls falling down, the snake in the Garden of Eden, and Noah and his ark. But I also wondered things like “what kind of God would drown all those animals and all those innocent people because they weren't all bad were they?”

And what about the story of Lots wife being turned into a pillar of salt just because she was curious and looked back! Boy, I would've been in a lot of trouble if I lived back then!

One of my regrets from my university days is that in my education I didn't take a religious studies course. This is my chance now to have a sort of a do- over as we study the Bible and the common origins of the major religions. Learning that many people wrote the Bible, over a long period of time and to be able to look at it in the historical context is so terribly interesting. Some of the stories are magical, others deeply disturbing as we learned from

this weeks readings from the book of Judges (wow!) and some have valuable insights on how to live life but it's not the "word of God" it's the accumulated history, metaphor and mythology mixed with wisdom echoing across the generations and across continents.

So in all this we're still searching for our own personal sense of who is God, at least I am.

So with that I'm going to finish off with another little story. "A Sunday school teacher decided to have a young class memorize one of the most quoted passages in the Bible, Psalm 23. Eight-year-old Sandy was excited about the task but she just couldn't remember the Psalm. After much practice she could barely get past the first line. On the day that the kids were scheduled to recite Psalm 23 in front of the congregation Sandy was so nervous. When it was her turn she stepped up to the microphone and said proudly " the Lord is my shepherd and that's all I need to know" amen!

If only it were that simple – or just maybe it is!