

THE BIBLICAL WILD

www.thebiblicawild.org

the Biblical Wild: Pioneers in the Christian Wilderness.

WEEK IX: Numbers 21-36 / Psalms 46-51

From Psalm 51, let us pray: Create in me a clean heart, O God and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence. Do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore me to the joy of your salvation and sustain me in a willing spirit. Amen.

I'm Todd Ousley, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan and this is

In chapters 22 through 24 in the book of numbers we encounter one of the most interesting and perhaps the most entertaining story in all of Holy Scripture. It's the story of Balaam and his donkey.

The Israelites have camped out across the Jordan and across from Jericho and can see the Promised Land but have not yet occupied it. The ruler in the land knows about the Israelites and their reputation - how they have conquered other tribes and have taken the land bit by bit piece by piece. And he is afraid, particularly as he has heard that their numbers have grown. And so he calls someone to send curses upon the people of Israel and hoping that will stop them in their tracks and protect his people.

He calls on Balaam to do this by sending a couple of his representatives yet those representatives are unable to convince Balaam that he should curse the Israelites because Balaam has heard a word from the Lord that he is to bless them not curse them. So he sends them away. They come back with reinforcements to try and convince him. Overwhelmed by those reinforcements this time Balaam agrees and he gathers his things and saddles up his donkey and heads along the way.

As he is journeying the angel of the lord comes with sword in hand and stops in the middle of the road frightening the donkey that skitters to the side and tries to hide. And then in the most shocking and surprising part of the story the donkey begins to speak because Balaam has been so upset that he has taken out his staff and he's beat the donkey. Now for those of you are fans of the movies Shrek, imagine the donkey speaking and it's Eddie Murphy's voice coming out.

"Why are you beating me? I've been your faithful donkey! I've always been with you!"

The Angel of the Lord continues to say to Balaam, "You know your donkey has been faithful and if it hadn't been for your donkey I likely would have taken my sword and killed you so you should be thanking the donkey."

So Balaam, whose eyes have been opened that this is a message from the Lord, agrees

that he did wrong and needs to be faithful in his response. So he heads off on his journey and the angel says, "Remember you don't speak your words but speak the words I give to you".

That might be hard for us to see at times when we are caught up in the midst of the struggles of everyday life in the church or our everyday lives at home. But the story throughout Holy Scripture is of a God who catches hold of us and will not let go. Who continually finds ways to bless us and keep promises with us and invites us to a faithful and obedience that is equal to God. We have an opportunity to focus not on what our challenges are but to consider the many blessing that God has given us and to see how those blessings will multiply in this generation and in generations to come.

We moved from the original Dow homestead to the Alden B. Dow home and studio the place of creativity for one of America's most noted 20th century architects one who saw new possibilities of embracing buildings and the land a new voice for a new generation.

I have 2 questions for you this week:

1. That story of blessing or promise that can't be stopped can you tell?
2. How might the blessings you receive also be used to bless others?

God bless you and I will see you next week.