

To those of you reading this from Hilary and by email. I was using this time as a preparation for the Palestinian talk on Tuesday. The book CHOSEN is what Ted Brydges study group will be using. I hope you will check the scriptures references as you go along. Thank you for your interest. Peggy

Season of Creation Earth-Sunday September 18th 2016

Is the Holy Land still Holy Land?

Reflection by Peggy Jensen

Prayer: O Holy God, our own God. The God of Muslims, Jews and Christians. Why don't we recognize the blessings we have in common? There is so much we can celebrate and learn from one another. Why do we let differences divide us? As we look into the scriptures today, shine your light of wisdom. May we hear these words with open minds and open hearts. We pray for the people of the Holy Land, the Palestinians and the Israelis, we pray for peace and reconciliation. In the name of our One God. Amen.

What is your understanding of the Holy Land? I always thought it was the land that God promised to Moses when he led the oppressed Hebrew slaves out of Egypt. That is what it says in the Bible isn't it? Actually the Bible says many things. I want to use Walter Brueggemann's book **Chosen?** to help us to see some of the many perspectives that have led to the conflict over the land for Israel and Palestine.

Many opening comments get us started: this is one from Rabbi Michael Lerner
"Walter Brueggemann has done a great service to the Jewish people and all who rely on the Hebrew Bible by demonstrating that there is no straight line between these ancient holy texts and the oppression of the Palestinian people."

Dr. Mitri Raheb, president of Diyar Consortium and Dar-al-Kalima University College in Bethlehem... Senior Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, Palestine.... And author of this book Bethlehem.

"For too long Christians were connecting biblical Israel with the state of Israel. For too long the human rights of the Palestinians were violated in the name of divine rights. I commend this book to all who are concerned for peace and justice in the land called Holy."

As Christians, we are concerned about Peace and Justice. Has there ever been Peace in the Holy Land ?

We learned long ago not to take the Bible literally and we have also learned that you can find a biblical quote to justify any position.

The dispute between Palestinians and Israelis is elementally about land and secondarily about security and human rights. The appeal of the contemporary state of Israel to the Bible is simple. God gave the land to Abraham and succeeding generations, as it is written in Genesis and then to the people of the exodus. So here are some familiar reminders:

Genesis 17: 7,8 Ancestral tradition of Abraham

I will establish my covenant between me and you...all the land of Canaan

Exodus 4:22 Exodus tradition

God declares: *Israel is my first born son*, a role of privilege and responsibility

Exodus 19:5 Sinai Tradition

Israel is given the opportunity to be God's treasured possession

Deuteronomy 7:6-9 utilizes the most direct and unambiguous rhetoric for Israel's status as chosen: *God has chosen you out of all people. God loves Israel*

The covenantal formula when the people were in exile confirms Israel's status as

God's covenant partner: *I will be your God and you will be my people.*

Jeremiah 11:4, 24:7, 30;22. 31;33 (read this) and Ezek. X4

This sounds like a solid claim but did you hear the condition in Exodus:

"if you keep my commandments"

Is this a gift with strings attached?

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses sets forth the commandments and ordinances that must be kept if the land promise is to be retained.

Deuteronomy 11: 22-28 (read) The Deuteronomic *if* became a primary theme among prophets of the 8th and 7th centuries.

**Thus we may conclude that the land is given to Israel unconditionally,
but is held by Israel conditionally.**

The Exile: In July 587 BCE, Babylonian soldiers broke through Jerusalem's walls.... And destroyed the land.

Many references like we heard in the readings today –look in bulletin.

These are concluding comments from Walter Brueggemann. P.37,38

“Is today's Israel the same as the Biblical Israel? This question concerns the direct appeal of the contemporary state of Israel to the land of promise of the Bible to justify the geopolitical claims of Israel with particular reference to the scope of Greater Israel which includes the West Bank.

The appeal to the biblical promise must be put alongside very old claims by the Palestinians. Current Israeli leaders easily and readily appeal to the land tradition as though it were justification for contemporary political ends. *Nothing could be further from reality.* Any and every appeal to ancient tradition must allow for immense interpretive slippage between ancient claim and contemporary appeal. ... The textual tradition continues to sound its powerful claim, but it allows no final reading that would lead inevitably to a clear and lasting solution concerning vulnerable adversaries.”

So what do you think? Has this given you some new things to think about?

The Palestinian Israeli situation is very complicated.

A final thought from the Luke reading today

*“And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another,
who will give you what is your own?”*

May we hear what the Spirit is saying to us today. Amen