



A LIFE WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

Lesson 2 – Scripture: The Story that Forms Us

Dear friends:

All of us explain who we are by telling part of the story of our lives: “I grew up in such-and-such a place, and my parents were so and so, and I went to school at thus and such...” Of course, the truth is that each of us is part of many different stories. Which ones we tell determine how others think of us, but they also both shape and reveal how we think of ourselves. To call ourselves Christians is to claim a certain story as our own. Moreover, this particular story, with its sweeping claims about life and death, truth and falsehood, refuses to be made incidental. To be a Christian is to affirm that this is not merely one among many stories that define us, but the most fundamental one, the one that embraces and gives meaning to all the others.

In this second session, we consider what it means to say that the Bible tells the story that forms the church. Here and here alone do we have primary testimony to who Jesus is, what he has done, and how his life fits into the wider story of God’s creation and calling and redemption of the world. Therefore, the story the Bible tells is our starting point for constructing a Christian understanding of moral life.

But it is no simple matter to see what this means, or what difference it makes. First it will be necessary to provide an outline of the biblical story that will be recognizable to all Christians. Then we must consider how this story shapes how we see ourselves, one another, and the world around us. What picture of human existence do we draw from this narrative, and what expectations about human behavior? What does it tell us about evil and suffering? And how does it present God as present and powerful in the world? We will look not only for the beliefs Christians take from our basic narrative, but also for the attitudes it teaches us to cultivate: attitudes of humility and trust, hopefulness and patience, as we imitate the love of God offered to us in Christ.

Finally, we turn to what we commonly think of as the stuff of ethics. How does our shared story teach us to regard the possibilities and limitations of our lives? What does it mean for the conduct of our moral lives? We will finish this session by talking about moral conversation itself, and about how people who take this story as their own enter into discussion, debate, and disagreement with one another.

Sincerely,

Sondra