

Weekly Bible Study group – April 8, 2009

This week's reading assignment: James 1:1-20

Reflection by Bob Zurinsky, SPU Center for Worship

We've arrived at a very interesting point in our study of scripture this year.

Up until now, we've been reading a narrative—a story. We started the year by reading the story found in the book of Genesis. It's a story about “beginnings,” the beginning of the universe and the beginning of God's chosen people. Then we followed that up by reading the story of Jesus in the book of Matthew. In Matthew we found not only the story of one man's life, but we also heard Jesus' predictions and teaching about the future—the part of the story that we haven't even experienced yet.

So why did we read these books? Why do we care so much about the stories?

For this reason: we believe that God is writing one big Story throughout all of creation. It's the story of the universe that he made. It's the story of how that world is broken and fallen. And it's the story of God putting all the pieces back together again in the most unexpected ways. We saw the broad outline of that big Story in our readings from Genesis and Matthew.

Hopefully, we're coming to see *our own lives* as connected to something bigger than ourselves. We're a part of God's Story, we're a part of God's plan. And as his chosen people, he's given us a mission and purpose within the Story: he's sent us out to be his hands and feet in his work of redeeming the world.

So now to James. This book isn't a story at all. Which makes this quarter different from the past two quarters. This is a book of instructions and teaching, written to early Christians who were trying to figure out their own place in God's Story. They knew that Jesus had lived and died and been raised back to life. They knew that he promised to come back again and make all things right once and for all. But, like us, they were trying to figure out how to be a faithful part of God's mission in the world here and now.

Read James 1 this week. When you see this letter addressed to “the people of God scattered throughout the whole earth” – that's you!!! What does this letter have to say to us in the present, as we seek to be faithful to the good news and the hope that we've been given?