

Grove Presbyterian Church
7 February, 2010

Too many people seem to believe there is only one way and that is exactly as it is written in the Bible. There should be more room for interpretation.

Just as an artichoke has some leaves with much meat and some with little, so some scripture is meatier than others, but it is all artichoke

Some days – you know the kind of days I’m talking about -- you just get surprised to discover your life has been a house of cards. And it all comes tumbling down.

Which source will create our culture? Upon what will you build your life?

Lots out there say, “Pick me, pick me! I’m the answer.”

I choose the Bible.

So if we choose the Bible, which Bible? Which Bible is the real one? The right one? Here is my Bible collection. Greek. Hebrew. Latin Vulgate. Septuagint. NRSV. KJV. Good News. Jerusalem. New English. NIV. Llega Dios.

You get 20 persons in the room, you get 20 opinions. Which is exactly the Bible’s strength, not its weakness. Sure, it’s all interpretation. Like a medical diagnosis. Or art. Or onions and Ogres (lots of layers). It’s a process of discovery, like love. Like friendship.

Just as wine is best contained in glass or clay jars, so the wisdom of God is best preserved by the humble.

Which medium conveys more truth? Michelangelo’s Pieta or a tortured movie about Jesus? A song about love or an essay about love?

It not as if we treat the Bible as the Qu’ran is treated, with only one authentic version possible. Direct from God. Unassailable. Inviolable. You don’t interpret, you obey! Well, I’m not sure if obedience qualifies as love.

Let’s be clear. We do not believe in the Bible. There’s nothing sacred about this book. We scribble in it. It’s got torn pages. We toss it in the garbage bin or fireplace when it’s worn beyond use.

We don’t venerate it. That would make it an idol. We worship what it reveals and surprises us with.

What’s holy is what it communicates. The medium in the message. The message in the medium. God talking with you. Not at you. And it’s more than the lines on the pages –

it's the whole relationship with the living message from cover to cover. I don't believe in the Bible. I believe by the Bible.

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so...

For how shall we compare thee?

Habakkuk 1: 14:

Just as the fishes of the sea perish when they come upon dry land so do men perish spiritually when they depart from the words of the Bible

Whereas a man who sells a precious thing is saddened to lose what he valued, and the new owner glad, when God gives the Word to others, God is glad

Jeremiah 23: 29

Just as a hammer shatters a rock into many pieces, so every utterance of the Word is rendered into other languages

Jeremiah 23: 29

Just as a fire cannot burn by itself, so too the words of Scripture do not remain with the one who is alone, they must be shared

Proverbs 3: 19

Just as a small twig may kindle a larger branch, so does a lesser scholar sharpen the understanding of the greater one by his questions.

Proverbs 27: 18

Just as a fig tree yields its fruit to those who harvest it, so the one who searches the Scripture receives inspiration.

Isaiah 55: 1

Just as water descends from a higher place to a lower place, so the words of scripture can only be retained by the humble

Proverbs 5: 19

Just as a breast supplies milk as often as the suckling child desires it, so whoever seeks the scriptures receives.

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The more you study the whole, you understand the parts. The more you study the parts, you understand the whole.

Many voices call out and want our attention. Pick me! Pick me! In the midst of the noise, can you hear God's calling?

It is very easy to talk about God. Very different to talk with God.

Very easy to study with your eyes. Very different to listen with your ears and heart.

Which is the real one, the right one?

I like a scribbled-in Bible, broken spine, worn cover, torn pages – like an old friend. A lot like us...a bit tattered and used and well worn around the edges. Like an old friend you really can't sum up in few words. Can you remember when you became friends? Relationships just aren't that simple. Like an old friend with whom you want to spend time. An old friend who's an old friend because you take time to listen to each other. Old friends are friends you trust more than you can explain why.