

“Covenant and Kingdom, Unraveling the DNA of the Bible” Lent 1 2/21/10 (slide)

Most of you have probably heard many times how important it is to read the bible. You hear me expounding the virtues of being in the bible on a daily basis all the time. Yet for the average Christian the bible can still seem distant.

Sometimes appreciating the bible is like appreciating “high art”. You kind of know you should like it, but you are not really sure how to. Much like when you go to a Shakespeare play and although the words sound nice, you are really not sure what is going on? Or maybe you have gone to an Opera and appreciated the beauty of the music and singing, but not really sure what the story is all about.

The audience is captivated and mystified at the same time. Sometimes we may even copy the audience’s emotions to react in a way we are supposed to think or feel. Can anybody relate? Maybe you feel that way when I preach, LOL, I hope not!

This happens a lot with as we study the bible. We pretend to know what is going on and even may emote a response to other people’s response to the bible. But the studies show that biblical literacy among today’s believers is very low.

As we look to our roots as a Lutheran church, and the Reformation which Martin Luther catalyzed with his own return to reading and understanding the message of the bible, we see that at the core of our DNA is getting the bible into the hands of the people.

When Luther translated the bible into German it was a huge step for this process. Can you imagine the joy of the people of Germany being able to finally read about the greatest gift God has given us in their own native language? It makes we wonder if we could restore this kind of joy into re-discovering the power of this book?

As we try to introduce this bible afresh, over the next six Sundays we are going to unravel the mystery of the bible! Like any good book there is a theme, plot and a message the author, or in this case authors, are trying to convey.

But the bible is unlike any other book, because we believe these human authors are inspired by God. **We believe that the words on this book are the very words of God**, as they have been faithfully transmitted, and now translated into many versions in English.

As we look at unraveling the DNA of the bible, we see two strands running throughout the 66 books (39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament). If you like we can use the metaphor of a “double helix”, which you can see on this slide.

Since Science was my absolute worst subject I will try to keep it simple as to what this is. A double [helix](#) is a geometrical shape consisting of two helices around the same axis. A helix is a twisting spiral shape, like a spring. The two helices in a double helix are congruent, meaning that they are the same in every dimension, though in different positions around the axis.

The double helix is probably best known as the shape of deoxyribonucleic acid ([DNA](#)), the material that carries genetic information in the body. I have also shown a slide of a double helix staircase that is at the Vatican, to give you another image of it. [\(Slide\)](#)

As we look at the bible the two strands that we see are “Covenant” and “Kingdom”. [\(slide two bullets\)](#) We often just open to the bible hoping to be enlightened, but using Covenant and Kingdom as our lens, it might help us understand the DNA of the bible.

The first theme, Covenant, has to do with “relationship”. [\(first bullet\)](#) The best way to understand God’s desire to be in relationship with us is to look at the bible as a “love letter”. When Francheska and I met, since I had sworn off dating for six months, we couldn’t go on a date for three months after we met on 3/28/2000. So from 3/28/2000 until 7/4/2000 when our first date occurred, we got to know each other through emails.

I still remember today getting emails from FAndrews33@aol.com. I couldn’t wait to read them and respond back. I think I still have them somewhere! It would be great to read through them again!

Wouldn’t it be great if when we opened the bible we could have the same excitement, to read our God’s, the Creator of the Universe, love letter.

As we look at the first book Genesis (which means Beginnings!), we see God’s desire to be in relationship with us from the start. Genesis 1 says that we were made in His very image. [\(slide\)](#) We bear His likeness, as God fashioned the clay with His imprint. And He breathed His Spirit into our beings. From the beginning we were meant to connect with God!

However that connection is disrupted as we read in Genesis 3, where Adam and Eve pull away from God and the imprint, and they end up naked and uncovered. They were uncovered and lost the connection with God.

But then we see in Genesis 12, that God re-established a relational connection through Abram, who will later be called Abraham, the Father of many nations. God promises Abraham in Genesis 12 that He will make His name great and be the Father of many nations. Of course there is just one problem, Abraham doesn’t have a Son. [\(slide\)](#)

God makes good on his side of the covenant as Sarah gives birth to Issac at an old age. Abraham for his side trusts in God and moves his whole family left where he grew up to go the Promised Land.

So we see God had initiated the Covenant but Abraham had to trust in faith and act on it. Since my parents are here I remember leaving home in 1991 and my two wonderful parents who are here to set out for California. I knew God would provide but I still needed to step out in faith. My Dad and I had a great journey out here, but then there was that time I had to say, I am here to stay I know God has a plan for my life.

So Covenant is about our identity, who we are in relationship to God. It is about our being part of God's family. What about Kingdom?

Not only do we see who we are in Genesis 1, as made out of the very imprint of God, we also see our purpose. Our purpose is to rule on His behalf. God said,

"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1:26 (slide)

You and I have a stunning task: to rule on God's behalf. Whereas Covenant is about relationship, Kingdom is about responsibility. (slide) And with that responsibility comes the authority to rule on His behalf.

Relationship and Responsibility Covenant and Kingdom! Being and Doing!

These will be the themes we will unveil over the next five weeks. You know I have devoted quite a bit of time in my life to studying the bible, and I have to admit this is something I have never grasped before. It has given me a fresh lens to look at the bible anew.

If you are not completely getting it right now that is okay. We are going to re-visit these themes throughout this series, and then see as Jesus comes in the New Testament as the ultimate example of Covenant in His relationship with God as the unique Son of God, and Kingdom in the authority and power He lives his life with!

It is as you and I discover our identity as a child of God that we will have a new obedience that flows out of this covenant relationship with our Heavenly Father.

You see so many people try to obey God, so that God will love and accept them and they will have an identity. That is opposite of the biblical message. Trying to obey in our own power often leaves us deflated and discouraged. This kind of relationship is based on fear. Fear of what will happen to me if I don't do enough good stuff for God. But God establishes our identity as his kids so we can obey Him in His power!

But the bible says, **“Perfect love casts out all fear!”** It is only as you see God has your heavenly Father that you will be able to pray to him like Jesus when he said, “Abba Father!” That meant “daddy”!

Before you can take on the responsibility of acting on God’s behalf, you first need to know your identity in God’s family. In this family there is no fear or anxiety resident in your heart, because you know Your Father Loves You! And out of that you can do great and significant things.

I look forward to further understanding more about this double helix of kingdom and covenant during Lent, as we better understand our identity as sons and daughters of the King. My prayer is that this bible would move from a distant reality to our daily bread and conversation with the Creator of the Universe, our Heavenly Father, Amen.