

HIS STORY—Part 1 discussion

REMEMBERING

1. What might be the dangers of removing the Christian faith from its story origins and reducing it to a creed, a series of propositions, or a set of doctrines?

REFLECTING

2. What are your thoughts and feelings about the Frederick Buechner quote about the gospel as tragedy, comedy, and fairy tale?

It is possible to think of the Gospel and our preaching of it as...a speaking of the truth about the way things are. And it is possible to think of that truth as tragedy, as comedy, and as fairy tale. The Gospel is bad news before it is good news. It is the news that man is a sinner, to use the old word, that he is evil in the imagination of his heart, that when he looks in the mirror all in a lather what he sees is at least eight parts chicken, phony, slob. That is the tragedy. But it is also the news that he is loved anyway, cherished, forgiven, bleeding to be sure, but also bled for. That is the comedy. And yet, so what? So what if even in his sin the slob is loved and forgiven when the very mark and substance of his sin is that he keeps turning down the love and forgiveness because he either doesn't believe them or doesn't want them or just doesn't give a damn? In answer, the news of the Gospel is that extraordinary things happen to him just as in fairy tales extraordinary things happen.... Zacchaeus climbs up a sycamore tree a crook and climbs down a saint. Paul sets out a hatchet man for the Pharisees and comes back a fool for Christ. It is impossible for anybody to leave behind the darkness of the world he carries on his back like a snail, but for God all things are possible. That is the fairy tale. All together they are the truth. (Frederick Buechner, *Telling the Truth*)

DISCOVERING

3. Read the passage again and answer the questions.

*From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we're telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too! (1Jn 1:1-4, *The Message*)*

- What phrases in this passage strengthen your faith?
- What phrases convey the purpose of the story being proclaimed?

CONNECTING

4. The final sentence of the message and Power Point today was, "The story of Jesus provides a framework for making sense of life." How? (See the Hauerwas quote for help.)

A kind of fatalism in which one's life is seen as fundamentally out of control, in which one is a victim of time, is rendered impotent by a narrative construal, which allows one to integrate one's misfortunes into an ongoing framework. (Stanley Hauerwas, *Naming the Silences*)

RESPONDING

5. How will you approach the Gospels differently—whether reading or listening—because of insights gained today?