

Bible study – reflections for Re-imagining, Wittenberg 2016 - Saturday morning session

Rev. Jac Franken

1) Introduction:

When we try to listen to the word of God we believe that the old scriptures of the bible are a primary source for us as Christians. An important aspect of the Reformation - and especially Martin Luther played a role here with his *Verdeutschung der Schrift* - was that this primary source became available for everyone instead of only for the academics. Re-imagining Protestantism(s) is about the church as well as about theology and we cannot do this without a connection to the bible.

The question for this session is:

- which biblical story or person pops up for you in relation to tent, temple and public square?
- what could be the transformative element in this story for our time and our place?

2) Buzzing

10 minutes

We buzz in small groups (two or three persons) to exchange around these questions.

3) Plenary

10 minutes

Plenary session where we can share some things, but not everything has to come back in plenary.

4) Some final reflections

The nomadic tent of the tribes or the tent of Sukkot associates with dynamics, movement, Kaffee Kirche. The temple associates with a state and buildings, institutions and cathedrals and fixed opinions. The public square is a different kind of logic. Zacharia 8:4,5 describes the square in Jerusalem as a place where the children and old people should be able to play and sit in peace. For Paul the Areopagus in Greece is the public place where he shares his story about God with other believers in a different culture. For me the public square is also the world wide web with tweets and virtual places like mychurch.com. And God dwells and finds a place in a tent and in a temple and on the Internet. This is not because God is 'boxed' in a place but because we the people are 'boxed': we are born, we live and we die in a certain space and time and that is context. And this context can become a holy place and holy time.

Examples:

- Exodus 3:5 The burning thorn bush on the Horeb the mountain of God, is a holy place , holy soil ; and God is there and Moses responds: "Here I am!"
- In Ex 20: 24 [21 in BHS] we hear: "Wherever I allow My name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you."
- In Ex 25:8 God speaks to Moses: "And they shall make Me a sanctuary (<miqdash) and I will dwell in their midst" (and in the next verse: tent or tabernacle < mishkan).
- In the first book of Kings 9 : God makes the temple to a hoiy place to dwell, however as soon as people break the covenant and the relation the temple will become a ruin.
- In Mathew 17:4 the disciples want to build three tents on the mountain, for Jesus, Mozes and Elia But Jesus refuses this and the movement in the gospel of Matthew is from the mountain down to earth and down to the people, just as in the case of Moses on the mountain and God who dwells in the midst of the people in the desert.
- In the gospel of John 1:14 we read: the Word became flesh and pitched His tent (<eskenosen) among us! No tent or temple but God becomes human.
- And Paul writes to the Korinthians (1 Kor 3:16, 17 and 1 Kor 6:19): 'you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God houses in you'.

So with exploring the metaphors of tent and temple we end up with ourselves as persons and living stones in the place and time where God dwells among people.