

Fresh Look At Deuteronomy with Rev. Harry Robinson Pt 7

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[0 : 00] I walked up to him and said, Dana, long time no see. Fear was in his eyes.

The woman, his wife, looked up curiously and Dana hastily introduced me as Scout. We used to play football together in high school. Isn't that nice, she said and continued strapping in the child. Hey, look, you've got kids, I said. Great. When did you get married? Dana cut me short. He slammed the rear door, shoved away the shopping cart without bothering to get his 25 cents back from the cart's locked device, fumbled with his keys and headed to the driver's door.

Can't talk to you, Scout. I just can't. Hey, okay. Okay, no problems, ma'am, I said. Dana turned the ignition. His wife smiled and waved at me and shouted, nice to meet you, through the decreasing crack in the window that Dana was rolling out.

A week later, around six at night, Dana phoned me up. I'm not hard to reach.

[1 : 06] My phone number has been the same for almost 10 years. And he was obviously at a pay phone with cars and trucks roaring in the background. It's me, he said. I figured.

You okay? Pause. Absolutely. I tried to make conversation and felt vaguely like I was in a quiet room with somebody on terminal life support.

Your wife seems nice, I said. I pray for you, he replied. Oh, I said. Oh, thanks. I pray for you because you have no faith and hence no soul.

Hey, damester, I may be faithless, but I'm not without a soul. I'll thank you not to patronize me either.

God is descending into the suburbs, Scout. We never expected judgment in our time, but it is going to happen. Dana, what's the deal? The time is coming, Scout.

[2 : 10] You will not have to live inside linear time anymore. The concept of infinity will cease to be frightening. All secrets will be revealed. There will be great destruction.

Structures like skyscrapers and multinational corporations will crumble. Your dream life and your real life will fuse. There will be music. Before you turn immaterial, your body will turn itself inside out and fall to the ground and cook like steak on a cheap abachi.

And you will be released and you will be judged. Hmm. Dana. I think I have somebody on call waiting.

Can I phone you back? You may be driving in a car when it happens. You may be shopping in a fashionable store. You may be, hey, Dana, gotta go. Ciao. And there is Dana.

Todd's life has changed the least of any of us. He dropped out of Simon Fraser University over a decade ago and began scamming full-time between tree planting and unemployment insurance, a way of life he shows no signs of ever altering.

[3 : 32] He shares a 1940s house off Commercial Drive in East Vancouver with an ever-changing ragtag ensemble of eco-freaks, slackers, deadheads, Quebecois nationalists, mountain bikers, and part-time musicians.

Our biggest common bond is that right after high school we spent two summers together tree planting, gypsying about from contract to contract, sowing seedlings and clear cuts spanning British Columbia, Bower and Lake, Camper Creek, the Okanagan, Nelson, Sansegut, Temple Cut, the Shimahat Valley.

We had herbicide dumped in our faces from upwind helicopters. We swam in cranberry bogs. We heard strangers tap on motel windows up in the Queen Charlotte Islands, whispering, hash, shrews, coke.

We took 30-minute group showers in Prince George, sharing precious hot water and scraping off charcoal from clear-cut burns with pumice blocks.

It was a good time of life. Todd never left it. I will visit Todd's house and he will tell me his theories about literally everything. I visit him only a few times a year.

[4 : 53] He never visits me downtown. He will sit perched on his balan's chair, the pads of which are covered with Dr. Seuss' The Lorax t-shirts, while he eats a sublingual B12 vitamin.

Hi, Todd! I will say above a full-volume Fortune 5 tape that will be acting as a soundtrack to a muted zombie film on the VCR.

Dudetsky, Dudetsky, or Dudetsky. Snack? He will offer me something lumpy that rests in an abalone shell, and I will say, sure.

And he will toss a sourdough bun to me across the braid-rugged floor strewn with wineskins, foam pads, cargo pants, sleeping bags, wool socks, a surfboard, kitty squeak toys, and jumbo tiki salad forks and spoons.

Todd will be dressed in biking shorts, fingerless wool gloves, and an errand sweater from Ballyu Village. Soggy couch and sweaters will lie in the hooks in the front hallway.

[6 : 00] I will feel hopelessly bourgeois in whatever I'm wearing, and sit in the surplus Boeing 737 seat near Todd's balance chair. Todd, I will say, can I turn down the music?

Huh? What's that? I will turn off the music. There will be peace, and then we will talk. Tree planting pays spittle, he will say.

I won't bother pointing out he does have other options in life. Todd will be restless. Perhaps he will be on some sort of drug. Stacey ended up alcoholic, but Todd ended up the drug.

Mark calls Todd's lifestyle wake and bake. Todd will fiddle with the buttons of a Motorola walkie-talkie lying on top of a stack of Macintosh diskettes.

Outside teenagers' drag race on nearby Commercial Drive. Performance artists, agitated by too many espressos, screech the Jeopardy theme song like Randy Tomcats.

[7 : 08] There is a feeling of colorful, snug chaos. Chaos with an undercurrent of disturbing randomness. We will talk about the old times a bit, but Todd won't be much interested.

I'm the only one of the group he keeps up with, and even then, it's entirely through my own efforts. The possibility of a reunion for all seven of us is pretty much out of the question.

How are we for... I'm right. I see our times. Yeah. Oh. Oh. Till the end, or till where this thing was? Where was that? I don't know. We're on 303. It's already running a bit. It's pretty, yeah. To go. I wanted you to meet these characters.

Oh yeah. Well, I think I'd even better wind Teri that pressure. No, wait a minute. I want you to finish it. I think, you know, would you be good and willing to take 10 more brief pages?

[8 : 34] Would you last do that? These are the last 10 pages, but I wanted you to get that sort of picture of generation.

Okay, so the last 10 of the book here. Okay.

After another hour of this, I saw a logging company's road numbering sign, Haddon 1000.

This magic number was the only clue I needed to know that I was where I wanted to be. I followed a short road down a hill that ended in a cul-de-sac. This cul-de-sac was beside an ancient, unharvested rainforest.

If I had once thought of life as an endless car ride, then now my car had finally stopped. I thought this. I thought of how an embryo doesn't know where on earth or when in history it is going to be born.

[9 : 38] It simply pops out of its womb and joins its world. The landscape I saw before me is the world that I had joined, the world that made me who I am.

And that is my story until now. Here I now lie on my stomach, looking out at the dark, wet world, pulling the blanket tighter around me, smoking a cigarette, and knowing that this is the end of some aspect of my life, also a beginning, the beginning of some unknown secret that will reveal itself to me soon.

All I need do is ask and pray. I stub out my cigarette, close the tent flaps, and lay back on the ground sheet on top of the soil.

I close my eyes and prepare to sleep. But something underneath me nudges my spine. I reach my arms out of the flaps into the rain and underneath the ground sheet where I pluck out a small object.

I bring it back inside and feel it. It is a spruce pine cone. I smell it, cold and wet, and then hold it up to my cheek. I then stick my arm back outside the tent and plant the cone in the soil, just below the ground sheet.

[11:01] Time is how the trees grow. I will fall asleep for a thousand years. And when I wake, a mighty spruce tree will have raised me up high, high into the sky.

And now it is morning. I crawl from the tent, wrapped in my grey blanket, and look upward into the treetops. There are the sounds of birds.

Swifts? Marbled murlis? I see that the sky is now clear and blue. I eat a few Ritz crackers and another chocolate bar, and my mouth desperately craves water.

Still huddled inside the blanket and my business suit, I walk over the soft moss down to the shore of the stream that flows below my tent. Clear water flows over a gravel bar.

Alders form a colony beside a deep pool in which schools of Oolacan flutter like moos. I kneel down and sip water from the pool.

[12:06] I raise my head and look through the clearing in the trees. I see the sun shining in the sky, a spinning ball of fire, like a burning basketball atop a finger.

This is the same sun, the same burning orb of flame that shone over my youth, over swimming pools and Lego and craft dinner and malls and suburbia and TV and books about Andy Warhol. And this is the ball of fire that now shines on Mark, that burns his skin, that triggers cancers. This is the fire that shines on Stacey, that overheats her and makes her crave a drink.

This is the fire that shines over Dana, the fire that will one day rain a destruction into his universe.

And this is also the fire that shines onto Julie's house, that makes her children play underneath the sprinkler.

This is also the fire that feeds the trees that Todd plants. And this is also the sun that Christy with her fair skin avoids, so that she can stay pretty and meet the man she will love forever.

[13:14] I stare into the spinning ball of fire, the fire that burns and heats the winter, with no fear of blindness. I remove my blanket and fold it and place it on the warm rocks beside the water.

I then remove my shoes and socks and stick my feet into the water. And oh, it is so cold.

I peel my clothes and step into the pool beside the burbling stream onto polished rocks and water so clear that it seems it might not even be really there. My skin is grey from lack of sun, from lack of bathing.

And yes, the water is so cold, this water that only yesterday was locked as ice up on the mountain tops. But the pain from the cold is a pain that does not matter to me.

I strip my pants, my shirt, my tie, my underwear, and they lie strewn on the gravel bar next to my blanket. And the water from the stream above me roars.

[14:16] Oh, does it roar! Like a voice that knows only one message, one truth, never ending. Like the clapping of hands and the cheers of the citizens upon the coronation of the king, the crowds of the inauguration, cheering for hope and for that one voice that will speak to them.

Like the Now, here is my secret. I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again.

So I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God.

That I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give because I no longer seem to be capable of giving.

To help me be kind as I no longer seem capable of kindness. To help me love as I seem beyond being able to love.

[15:28] I walk deeper and deeper into the rushing water. My testicles pull up into myself. The water enters my belly button. It freezes my chest, my arms, my neck.

It reaches my mouth, my nose, my ears. And the roar is so loud. This roar, this clapping of hands. These hands. The hands that heal.

The hands that hold. The hands we desire because they are better than desire. The hands that touch the lips.

The lips that speak the words. The words that tell us we are whole.

The words that tell us we are whole.

[16:42] Sorry to catch you, but I am playing myself up that's a brilliant contrast to reading Deuteronomy. I think it puts Deuteronomy in context.

Moses prayed for them and the prairie sort of argues and becomes a lawyer with God and argues that there's two reasons for that Israel should be spared and they are that Israel is thy people and thy heritage. And the second reason is that the people referring to, like the people in Egypt would say that the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which was promised to them. And so those are the two reasons that Moses are these. That the people in Egypt would say that the Lord wasn't able to bring Israel into the promised land. Destroy them. Yeah. Thank you. Any other comment on? Comment on chapter? There's one verse that I liked or one of the phrase and that was God writing on the stone tablets with his finger. There's sort of an immediacy about that image. Yeah. That's very attractive.

What brush is that? Where's the same? Oh, there it is. Tim.

Oh, there it is. Tim. If I, yeah. It's, uh...

Well, that's great. Thank you very much for that, Tim.

[25 : 01] Phil, are you, well, I guess in the sequence of verses we should then go to, uh, to, uh, Janice. Are you, are you thinking of doing it this morning, Janice?

Would you like to? Yeah, I can try. I'm doing 11 though. Oh, you're doing it. I've got 10, Harry. Oh, sorry, Beth. Okay, Beth, would you do 10?

Okay, in chapter 10, Moses rehearses God's mercy and tells how they were given the commandments a second time after the first were broken. Uh, in first, in verse 8, he reminds them that the Lord separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the the covenant, where the tablets were placed, uh, when he came down from the mountain. Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his brethren, but the Lord is his inheritance as God promised.

And Moses encourages the people to believe and obey God in order to receive God's blessing. In fact, verses 12 and 13 seem to be, uh, uh, considered the key verses of the book of Deuteronomy. Just take a look at 12 and 13.

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord in his statutes, which I command you today for your good.

[26 : 40] And, uh, uh, and he goes on to magnify God and to tell how the Lord delighted in them, uh, and, uh, and loved them and chose them.

And, uh, Moses reminds them of the great and awesome things the Lord has done for them. Their fathers had gone down to Egypt with seventy persons, And now they were as the stars in heaven in multitude.

And that's it. You remember that the stars in heaven was the promise given to Abraham when he was childless.

And so you see the fulfillment of that. And I imagine, you know, living as we do in modern urban settings, we're not very impressed with the stars in heaven, but to be night after night in the open desert with a clear sky, you'd be very impressed with the stars in heaven.

And it would be a terrific panorama to be looking out on to say that's... Any questions came up with you?

[28 : 09] I think that if you guys had taken kindly and not laughed to scorn the idea of memorizing things, it would be nice of you to memorize that part of Deuteronomy 12 and 13.

Maybe you can do that as a memento to take away from... I'm trying to remember the passage in Micah where it's what the Lord is part of you... That's Micah.

Yeah. Okay. Okay. Uh... Now, Janice, do you want to...

You're on 11, aren't you? I was going to say that if you just were putting your notes on chapter 6, you would be just free, we'll have it covered. Um...

The chapter starts off with the commandment, as before, love the Lord be God and keep His requirements, His decrees, His laws, and His commands always.

[29 : 27] Then through the rest of the chapter, it's a balance of reminding of the responsibilities and of the choice that they're going to have between the blessing and curses.

One of the things that he remarks on twice is that it was them, not... They were the ones who saw what the Lord had done for them, not their children.

And it's a tremendous responsibility because... Uh... And he reminds them what they did see, um... Even though they were probably of being children at the time.

Um... But that that responsibility is inherent, that they have to make sure that they pass that along to their children.

He says, But it was your own eyes that saw these great things. So true. Um... Observe therefore the commands.

[30 : 32] He's just telling them what the blessing will be. The land is not going to be like the land of Egypt, where they had access to irrigation. The land is going to be dependent upon the Lord, and it is the land that the Lord loves.

If they follow his word, they will have rain and wheat and oil. But if they turn away, the Lord's anger will shut the heavens and he will perish.

So once again, he reminds them of their responsibility to fix these words in their hearts and minds.

Do whatever it takes to make them uppermost, and then uppermost in their thoughts at all times.

Teach them to your children. Um... So that... So that, uh... Uh... Their children may be many in...

And, uh... In the land that the Lord swore to your forefathers. Once again, the choice. If you observe all the commands, then the Lord will drive all the nations before you.

[31 : 41] No man will be able to stand against you. Once again, I'm setting before you a blessing and a curse, that choice. If you disobey, then, uh...

Then the curse. And you proclaim that curse on the mountain. On two mountains. Um... And, uh... I...

I went once you enter the land. Um... And once again, the reminder, be sure. Be sure and choose. As...

As said before, be sure and choose life. Be sure and obey. I kind of skipped over the meaning of, uh... Putting it on the two mountains.

Because... It was... It's complicated. No. The blessing was towards... The blessing mountain was towards the east.

[32 : 41] Is that right? And, uh... The curse mountain was towards the west. But I wasn't quite sure exactly how that... How that all fit in. Well, we'll come back to that before the day is out, so...

That would be... That would be good. Any other comments or questions on that?

The only thing that stood out for me, personally, was that tremendous responsibility... Um... That hit me personally.

It was a tremendous responsibility to pass it on to the dead. To put on to the... My children what the Lord has done for me. Mm-hmm. To keep in that uppermost in my thoughts. And that is, um...

You know, that... That... Perhaps is more of a personal thing. That... But what a tremendous weight it is. Because if... If that's not done, That leaves a very large gap in the foundation, as it would have left a very large gap in the foundation of Israel.

[33 : 44] A block that's not been... Mm-hmm. That's not... That's not... That's not... That's not...

That's not... Now, that's a little... That's a little... Um... So...

Are you gonna go away from here with a great burden of guilt about passing this on to your children?

Or how are you gonna cope with that? Well... Um... Are you gonna become a Sunday school teacher in your... No, I... I mean... I have to say I don't like kids that much, but... Or maybe I do like them too much to do with that.

No, I'm... I'm thinking that I try to be as open as... Open as possible, but perhaps, um... With... With that... But there does seem to be this kind of thing of balance of...

Of privacy, or keeping things... Some things... Private and... And... And... And... And... I'm gonna go ahead and say, I don't like kids that much, but... I... I mean, I do like them too much to do with that.

[34 : 41] No, I'm... I'm thinking that I try to be as open as... Open as possible, but perhaps, um...

With... With that... But... There does seem to be this kind of thing of balance of... Of... Of privacy, or keeping things... Some things... Private, and...

And... And also, at the same time, that... That need to... That need to... To be able to explain... Uh... The... You know, the power of the Lord and... And His bounty.

And, uh... And sometimes it's a little confusing as to when... Uh... You keep... When you keep something... You know, when you keep things certain to yourself, and you don't infringe on...

On their... Infringe on... On people's, um... Lives or their... Where... Their private... You know, their... Where their private spot is... I don't know if that's a good way of putting it...

But, um... Trying to find that balance of... And maybe being a little bolder and being able to... To... To... To...

[35 : 39] To find that time to... To speak out... And to... Show the option... To show... To show the... The... The... Uh... That's what I don't want...

Yeah... You... You... You want to follow the best principles of child education without interfering or... Uh... Spiritually abusing your children and, uh...

And, uh... And, uh... You don't want to beat people over the head because... Yeah... You see too many times... Yeah... That you... All you're doing is turning them off... Uh...

Uh... Perhaps... Perhaps you could give us a good example of, uh... I mean... You know, I think... Satorially... Satorially...

You sort of... Win the prize again today with that t-shirt... Would you like to stand up and walk around the road? It's Moses parting the waters and his people are obviously complaining and he says, What do you mean it's a bit muddy?

[36 : 45] I said before, I think that says an awful lot about what I've often times said to God. Didn't you do a little bit better than that?

You know I haven't heard of this. Jan is your best dressed person. I think she's got something... Could I ask a question about this chapter?

To me reading through it, what you brought up, Janice, it raises that whole question of... Okay, if... You know, looking at it from a modern perspective... If we do everything we're supposed to do, everything will go well with us, which isn't true. Maybe it is ultimately true.

But, you know, why do bad things happen? Anyway, that really came to the forefront of my mind, looking at this particular chapter. Why do bad things happen to good people kind of thing.

[37 : 56] I think that's right. Yeah, and this does seem again and again to say, if you do what's right, it will go well with you. And it seems like immediately it will go well with you, is the impression you're getting from it.

Not that, you know, in the end it will all turn out. But it sounds like what it's saying is... Well, right now, don't you read that corporately though rather... We read it as individuals, you know, I'm doing what's right and therefore everything in my life should be going according.

Rather than, are you as a community doing what is right? You know, are you as a country doing what is right? Are you as a world doing what is right?

And we obviously are not. There are individuals within the society that are. And what he's saying is, I don't think he's saying individually, you know, you over there, Shem, you know, you do it right, it'll be okay with you, you know.

You do it wrong over here, it's going to go wrong with you, you know what I mean? You know, it's saying you as a community have to be right before the Lord. You know, you can't half worship in the temple and observe the feasts and give your first fruits and your tithes to the Lord.

[39 : 08] And the rest of you be up on the hills worshipping whatever you feel like. And expect me as God to bless you as a nation. And that's how, it's sort of how I'm reading it.

I have this feeling that we have this tendency to reduce it to individual blessing and curse. And it is corporate. Maybe because that is so helpful, but that's also very depressing.

Yeah, it is. Because what can we do about our country in a way, you know? Yeah. Because we are sort of a remnant. Yeah. And yet we have that individual ability like Moses, to be on our face and plead before God too.

We don't lose that ability as individuals just because our society is going a little down the dumper.

This is a good question, which we could spend some time at the end, because some of the things we want to go through this morning will, I think, contribute to answering that question.

So, the next thing I would like to do with you is a reading, a reading of the narrative.

[40 : 25] Are you ready for a reading of the narrative as we've done on several occasions? We've done Psalm 105 and Psalm 106 and Acts chapter 7.

There is another great and historic reading of the narrative in chapter 9 of Ezra. Now, Ezra is one of those movable books.

You might find it almost anywhere in the Old Testament. So, you have to just flip them, did you? So, you find it. And having said that, what I need by Ezra is Nehemiah, I do.

What I need by Ezra is Nehemiah. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, there's two. Oh, there's two. You mean Nehemiah who?

Nehemiah chapter 9. It's a chapter that's fairly long, but I think it is the narrative again.

[41 : 48] If I read it, can we read it sort of paragraph by paragraph as far as we go? Would that be alright? Wendy, would you pick up on two and Tim, you on three and keep going that way?

Mm-hmm. And Nehemiah chapter 9. On the 24th day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads.

Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their place and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers.

They stood where they were and read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day and spent another fourth in confession and in worshipping the Lord their God, standing on the stairs where the Levites, Jeshua, Bani, Cadmiel, Shebaniah, Bani, Sherabiah, Bani, and Canani, who called with loud voices to the Lord their God.

And the Levites, Jeshua, Cadmiel, Bani, Hashadniah, Sherabiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah. This is the lesson reader's worst nightmare.

[43 : 20] Come through. Suddenly find yourself in church with this formidable array.

And you've forgotten to read the lesson. And so on. Stand up and praise the Lord your God who is from everlasting to everlasting.

Blessed be your glorious name. And may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. You alone are the Lord.

You made the heavens. Even the highest heavens and all their stirring host. The earth and all that is on it. The seas and all that is in them.

You give life to everything. And the multitudes of heaven worship you. Thou art the Lord, the God who didst choose Abraham and bring him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees.

[44 : 35] Give him and give him the name Abraham. And thou didst find his heart faithful before thee. And didst make him the covenant to which his descendants, the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite.

And thou hast fulfilled thy promise, for thou art righteous. And we move on to... Thou didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and didst hear their cry by the Red Sea.

Then thou didst perform signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his servants, and all the people of his land. For thou didst know that they acted arrogantly toward them, and didst make a name for thyself as it is this day.

And thou didst divide the sea before them, so they passed through the midst of the sea on dry ground. And their pursuers thou didst hurl into the depths, like a stone into raging waters.

And with a pillar of cloud thou didst beat them by day, and with a pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go.

[45 : 59] You came down on Mount Sinai. You spoke to them from the heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and righteous through your servant Moses.

In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven, and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock. You told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them.

But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands.

They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them.

They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery.

But you were a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

Therefore you did not desert them, even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt.

[47 : 07] You were a forgiving God, and you were a forgiving God. Because of your great compassion we did not abandon them in the desert. By day the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take.

You gave your good spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst.

For forty years you sustained them in the desert. They lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out, nor did their feet become swollen. You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers.

They took over the country of Sion, king of Heshbon, and the country of Og, king of Fashin. You made their sons as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you

told their fathers to enter and possess.

Their sons went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites who lived in the land. You handed the Canaanites over to them, along with their kings and the peoples of the land, to deal with them as they pleased.

[48 : 29] They captured fortified cities and fertile land. They took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things, wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees in abundance.

They ate to the full and were well nourished. They reveled in your great goodness. But they were disobedient and rebelled against you.

They put your laws behind their backs. They killed your prophets who had admonished them in order to turn them back to you. They committed awful blasphemies.

So you handed them over to their enemies, who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed, they cried out to you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers, who rescued them from the hand of their enemies.

After some respite, again they did what was wrong in your eyes, and you abandoned them to their enemies, who held them in subjection. Yet once more they appealed to you, and time after time you heard them from heaven, and in your compassion saved them.

[49 : 46] Bring them back to your law, you swore. But arrogantly they flouted your commandments, sinning against all the ordinances which bring life to those who keep them.

Stubbornly they turned aside, and in their obstinacy they would not obey. Many years thou distbear with them, and distworn them by thy Spirit through thy prophets. Yet they would not obey them, and they would not obey them.

Therefore thou didst give them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

Nevertheless, in thy great mercies thou didst not make an end of them, or forsake them. For thou art a gracious and merciful God.

Now therefore, O our God, the great and mighty awesome God, who teaches covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in your eyes.

[50 : 57] The hardship that has come upon us, upon our kings and leaders, upon our priests and prophets, upon our fathers and all your people, in the days of the kings of Assyria until today.

In all that has happened to us, you have been just. You have acted faithfully while we did wrong. Our kings, our leaders, our priests and our fathers did not follow your law.

They did not pay attention to your commands, or the warnings you gave them. Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying your great goodness to them in the spacious and fertile lands you gave them, they did not serve you, or turn from their evil ways.

So not to provide a gift. the land that thou givest to our fathers to enjoy its fruits and its good gifts. Behold, we are slaves. And its rich yield goes to the kings, whom thou hast set over us, because of our sins. They have power also over our bodies and over our cattle and their pleasure, and we are in great distress. Because of all this we make a firm covenant and write it, our princes, our Levites, and our priests set their seal to us.

[52 : 16] So there is a picture of the renewing of the covenant. And there is the reading of the narrative and the renewing of the covenant, which in effect is what we seek to do in our weekly communion.

Review the narrative, renew the covenant. And that people lose sight of that, but there it is.

Okay, now I have an onerous duty to perform here, which I will... I underwent a very acute depression last night for about two hours after our session, having read that story.

I have been trying to figure out what it was about. But first I was embarrassed to have read it to you, because I was afraid that it might offend your sensibilities.

That was one thing. Another thing was that it, in effect, is a fairly depressing story. And another thing that has occurred to me, when I read to you from that book by Neil Postman the other day, about reading becoming a private kind of...

[54 : 02] What does he call it? An anti-social activity. It's something where you don't want anybody around, you know. And I guess reading a book like that is...

I mean, it normally would be done privately. You would read it by yourself, and you would deal with it privately, and you would respond to it privately, and you would...

So that when you take a book that is read, that is written for private consumption, by private individuals, by a private author who is telling you about his private life, you know, and that kind of

thing is happening, you...

You see what a long way printing has taken us from the gathering of the community to tell the narrative, you know.

You know, there's a vast difference, isn't there? And so, a lot of people, I think, are perhaps like this young man that wrote it, and perhaps like us when we read it privately, are entertaining a kind of vast...

[55 : 24] ...picture of the whole experience of life, regarded from a completely self-centered and private perspective, you know.

You don't bring that stuff out into the open, you know, by public reading or public... I mean, it's all done privately.

And, you know, and that... the one particular character whose very private life was... was blown wide over.

And the... the kind of... you know, that... that strange, strange... Anyway, I just felt very depressed in having read it.

So, I thought... I thought about it. And, uh... It's, you know, a picture of our modern world... ..uh...

[56 : 27] ...ravaged by disease, alcoholism, drugs, boredom, sex without love, nostalgic memories of what once was...

earthly salvation... endless motion... drug-flattened depressions... uh... becoming... moving from something towards nothing...

uh... the end of sincerity... social amnesia... and pointlessness... all those things were illustrated by that story last night.

And, uh... and, uh... it ends with the hope that... there is a secret that will reveal itself soon.

You know, that... uh... and, uh... I mean, that's... that's in a sense... an articulate pagan...

[57 : 32] I mean, I... this is what I assume about them... I don't know... an articulate pagan in our society... totally sort of conversant with our society...

saying... there needs to be... a revelation... you know... without... necessarily being able to make the connection with...

in the beginning was the Word... and the Word was with God... and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh... and dwelt among us... and we beheld His glory... that the revelation has in fact taken place...

the secret, uh... that, uh... when He talks about it... the, uh... the secret that will reveal itself soon... is the thing that He hopes will happen...

that some... something will break in on this... pattern that He has described... and... and... and that the... that the secret will break through... and, uh...

[58 : 33] that are... that a revelation will come... which is... I mean, I find that fascinating... that He... that He comes to that conclusion... then He considers the possibility or...

maybe I could fall asleep for a thousand years... you know... and, uh... that, uh... sort of... longing for eternity... but... existence is too brutal...

right here and right now... to go on existing... and, uh... if I could just go to sleep for a thousand years... and wake up... and, uh... everything would be different...

you know... that... that... that concept... uh... uh... it... it is... I think... in the form of a confession... for which there is no absolution... you know... that's, uh... uh... that's... in a sense what He's saying... that...

[59 : 31] that... He's making His... his confession... but... He sees no possibility of... of... and then... He... He... He says...

um... I am unable to give... I am unable to be kind... I am beyond... being able...

to love... you know... and, uh... this is the first and great commandment... that you love... huh... and I am rendered...

incapable... of love... incapable... even of kindness... I'm... I'm... I'm... I'm... I'm incapable of...

I mean... I... I... I get... and get... but I'm... incapable of giving... and so... you find that as a kind of... eloquent description...

[60 : 28] you see... now... uh... the thing... the thing which I... I think would be helpful for us... is...

if we could say about that passage... that that isn't His confession... that is our confession... that is our society...

that is our culture... that is the people to which... we belong... that is the people among whom... we have been born...

that is the... the... that is... that's where we belong... right in the midst of that... you know... our... that... that our religion...

is not... Deuteronomy... wise... is not... to... separate ourselves from that... but to recognize the reality of that...

[61 : 28] that that's... that's... our world... and... uh... and... what I would like to do from that... you know... as from the end of the narrative... in...

is to... is to... I have... I have... one more... this is a secret talking... I don't want you to let anybody... see that... I had it in my hands... ha ha...

hot... but it isn't what you think it is actually... had it in my hands. But it isn't what you think it is, actually.

It's worse than that. It's the prayer book before the prayer book.

So, this is the prayer book by which I was ordained in 1955, which became this prayer book in 1962, and then became this prayer book in the 80s.

[62 : 38] So I'm going back to prayer books to give you this. But in this prayer book, in both of these prayer books, there is what is called a service of penitence, I think.

But here it is a combination, or a denouncing of God's anger and judgment against sinners.

prayers, with certain prayers to be used on the first day of Lent and at other times, as the ordinary shall appoint. you see the healthy liturgical atmosphere of the times.

It says, after morning prayer, the litany ended according to the accustomed manner the reading in the reading pew or pulpit say this.

Now, what I'm going to do is read you this combination service, partly because it's built on Deuteronomy, or a large part of it is built on Deuteronomy.

[64 : 03] And I'd like you to hear it. I'd like you to hear it in a sense as though we were kneeling with, not just with ourselves, but with the community to which we belong, as it's outlined to us in that story we read last night, which, which, you know, which left me in a state of depression.

I don't know what it did for you, but it, I felt I needed something. And, and I would like to suggest to you that, I'd just like you to listen to this and you can tell me how you respond to it.

Are you ready for, I'm going to get you to sort of take part in the service where you can, but, but, let me just start.

This is the exhortation with which it begins. Brethren, in the primitive church there was a godly discipline that at the beginning of Lent such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance and punished in this world that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord and that others admonished by their example might be the more afraid to offend.

Instead, whereof, until proper discipline may be restored, which is much to be wished, it is thought good that at this time in the presence of you all should be read the general sentences of God's wrath against impenitent sinners gathered out of the 7th and 20th chapter of Deuteronomy and other places of Scripture and that you should answer to every sentence Amen to the intent that being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners you might rather be moved to earnest and true repentance and may walk more warily in these dangerous days fleeing from such vices against which you affirm with your own mouths the wrath of God to be revealed.

[66 : 50] The wrath of God is upon the man that maketh any carved or molten image to worship it and the people shall answer Amen Now we'll just do it that way if you don't mind I'll give you the sign The wrath of God is upon him that curseth his father or mother Amen The wrath of God is upon him that removeth his neighbor's landmark Amen The wrath of God is upon him that maketh the blind go out of his way Amen The wrath of God is upon him that perverteth the judgment of the stranger the fatherless and the widow Amen The wrath of God is upon him that smiteth his neighbor secretly

Amen The wrath of God is upon him that committeth adultery Amen The wrath of God is upon him that taketh reward to slay the innocent Amen The wrath of God is upon him that putteth his trust in man and taketh man for his defense and in his heart goeth from the Lord Amen The wrath of God is upon the unmerciful fornicators covetous persons idolaters slanderers blasphemers drunkards and extortioners Amen And now it is It goes it is back set up with a whole lot of other scriptures

Have you the patience to hear this? Yes Okay Now seeing that the wrath of God is upon all them Ah who do err and go astray from the commandments of God let us remembering the dreadful judgment hanging over our heads and always ready to fall upon us return unto our Lord God with all contrition and meekness of heart bewailing and lamenting our sinful life acknowledging and confessing our offenses and seeking to bring forth worthy fruits of penance Amen And then there is a series of scriptures all strung together from different places and these are how they reap and you listen to them you can if you want try and figure out where they come from but

For now is the axe put unto the root of the trees so that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God He shall pour down rain upon sinners snares fire and brimstone storm and tempest this shall be their portion to drink for lo the Lord is come out of his place to visit the wickedness of such as dwell upon the earth but who may abide the day of his coming who shall be able to endure when he appears his fan is in his hand and he will purge his floor and gather his wheat into the barns he will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire the day of the Lord cometh as the thief in the night and when men shall say peace and all things are safe then shall suddenly destruction come upon them as sorrow cometh upon a woman travailing with child and they shall not escape then shall appear the wrath of God in the days of vengeance which obstinate sinners through the stubbornness of their hearts have heaped unto themselves who despised the goodness patience and long suffering of God when he calleth them continually to repentance then shall they call upon me saith the Lord but I will not hear they shall seek me early but they shall not find me and that because they hated knowledge received not the fear of the Lord but abhorred my counsel and despised my correction then shall it be too late to knock when the door shall be shut and too late to cry for mercy when it is the time of justice oh terrible voice of most just judgment which shall be pronounced upon them when it shall be said unto them go ye cursed into the fire everlasting which is prepared for the devil and his angel therefore brethren take we take we heed the time while the day of salvation lasted for the night cometh when none can work but let us while we have the light believe in the light and walk as children of the light and and we be not cast into utter darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth let us not abuse the goodness of God who calleth us mercifully to amendment and of his endless pity promises us forgiveness of that which is past if with a perfect and true heart we return unto him for though our sins be as red as scarlet they shall be made white as snow though they be like purple yet they shall be made white as wool turn ye saith the [73 : 54] Lord from all your wickedness and your sin shall not be your destruction cast away from you all your ungodliness that you have done make you new hearts and a new spirit wherefore will you die O you house of Israel seeing that I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth saith the Lord God turn ye then and ye shall live although we have sinned yet have we an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous and he is the propitiation for our sins for he was wounded for our offenses smitten for our wickedness let us therefore return unto him who is the merciful receiver of all true penitent sinners assuring ourselves that he is ready to receive us and most willing to pardon us if we come unto him with faithful repentance if we submit ourselves unto him and from henceforth walk in his ways if we take his easy yoke and light burden upon us to follow him in lowliness patience and charity and be ordered by the governance of his holy spirit seeking always his glory and serving him duly in our vocation with thanksgiving this if we do

Christ will deliver us from the curse of the law and from the extreme maledictions which shall light upon them that shall be set on the left hand and he will set us on his right hand and give us the gracious benediction of his father commanding us to take possession of his glorious kingdom under which he vouchsafed to bring us all for his infinite mercy so that's a long scriptural admonition to us as a people and then we are to say this song if you want to turn to psalm 51 and we'll just read it through together

I'll read it from the bible so that we could perhaps read it responsibly in that way that we could that's what comes next in the service is the saying of psalm 51 have mercy on me oh god according to your unfailing love according to your great compassion block out my transgressions wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin for I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me against you you only have sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you are right when you speak and justified when you judge surely

I have been a sinner from birth sinful from the time my mother conceived me surely you have a truth in the inner arms you teach me wisdom in the most place cleanse me with hyssop and I will be

clean wash me and I will be whiter than snow let me hear joy and abundance let the bones you have crushed rejoice hide your face from my sins and blow out all my iniquity create me a pure heart of God and a new steadfast spirit within me do not cast me from your presence or take your holy spirit from me recharge me the joy of your salvation and grant me and I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will be will turn back to you save me from my guilt of the God has saved me and my tongue will sing your righteousness oh lord open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise you do not delight in sacrifice for our drink you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings sacrifices of God are a broken spirit a broken and contrite heart oh God you will not despise then there will be righteous sacrifices whole burnt offerings to delight you and bulls will be offered on your altar and it ends as the psalms do you know why they end this way because some of the psalms were thought not to be theologically very balanced and so in the

[80 : 19] Christian reading of the psalms they always balanced them out by at the end saying glory be to the father and to the son and to the holy spirit as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end in other words they brought them all within the doctrine of the trinity so that their concept of God wasn't to maintain the so that's with what it ends and then it says Lord have mercy upon us to which you reply Lord have mercy upon us our father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil the thine kingdom the power and glory forever and ever amen oh

Lord save thy servants who put their trust in them yeah I'm sorry you can try and do the response send upon them help from above and ever more mightily defend them help us oh God our savior and for the glory of thy name deliver us be merciful unto us sinners for thy name sake oh Lord hear our prayer and let our cry come to thee and then these prayers oh Lord we beseech thee mercifully hear our prayers spare all those who confess their sins unto thee that they whose consciences by sin are accused by thy merciful pardon may be absolved through Jesus Christ our Lord amen amen o most mighty

God and merciful father who has compassion upon all and hatest nothing that thou hast made who wouldest not the death of a sinner but rather he should turn from his sins and be saved mercifully forgive us our trespasses receive and comfort us who are grieved and wearied with the burdens of our sins and that was a good picture of that fellow last night a fellow who was grieved and burdened receive and comfort us thy property is always to have mercy to thee only it appertaineth to forgive sins spare us good Lord spare thy people whom thou hast redeemed enter not into judgment with thy servants who are vile earth and miserable sinners but so turn thine anger from us who meekly acknowledge our vileness and truly repent of our faults and so make haste to help us in this world that we may ever live with thee in the world to come through

Jesus Christ our Lord Amen and then this final prayer which is to be which it says then shall the people say this that follow us after the minister turn thou us good good Lord and so shall we be turned be favorable O Lord be favorable to thy people who turn to thee in weeping fasting and praying for thou art merciful merciful full of compassion long suffering and of great pity thou sparest when we deserve punishment and in thy wrath thinkest upon mercy spare thy people good Lord spare them and let not thine heritage be brought to confusion hear us O Lord for thy mercy is great and after the multitude of thy mercies look upon us through the merits and mediation of thy blessed son Jesus Christ our Lord Amen and it ends with the Lord bless us and keep us the Lord lift the light of his countenance upon us and give us peace now and ever more Amen I will live in interest and anticipation what you say tonight in response to the question what did you hear this morning let's take a brief break and we'll come back and and and because I've got some more work that I want us to do to follow up on this

[86 : 43] Janice I have a good feeling you should tell everybody what you just told me because that would be a good lead off for me and that would be I think a lot people would come up to would you mind doing what I said was listening to the reading last night brought home the realization that here was one very thirsty man of which was surrounded by very thirsty people and that the sensation that we have kept the location of the springs a secret that it should have been so obvious to him when he began to feel the need where to go but he didn't and that I wonder sometimes if we keep the location of the springs a little bit of secret because you get some people trampling around it that might make up a little muddy but it shouldn't be a secret it would be ideal to think that that

person who wrote that could come you know could fold up his little pup tent in the mountains get in his car and drive down and stop at the first church service he came to and go in there and find where kindness where kindness comes from where love comes from what the secret is what the revelation is he should find it all right there but what in fact would happen if he did that you know we won't discuss that but you can think about and I've always been very

I mean as a preacher very defensive but I but I've always been very helped by the fact that when the straight when they talk about the stranger in one Corinthians coming into church you know the fellow who comes in and he's there as a stranger his impression is not my that was a brilliant sermon but his impression has to do with the congregation of whom he says God is surely among you you know that he senses that long before he hears the message and you know that if God would honor us by giving us that kind of life together as a congregation that a stranger coming in would say

God is surely among you and what I'm looking for I would like to look for in company with this group of people that would do because I mean one of the things that I'm experiencing one of the really hard things in my life in retirement so to speak is going into churches and sitting in on services which I have with which I have nothing to do and the hostility and the anger that stirs up in me is just unbelievable I just you know it's not a spirit of worship that takes me over and I'm not saying this because there's something wrong with the church there's something wrong with me I mean I've you know where does this come from why do I have these negative feelings so it's a wonderful grace a miracle of God that a stranger like this person or anybody any of that company of people could come into church and have a deep sense that God is among you and go on from there

I've been it's been brought home to me repeatedly that churches and some ways are very hard things to break into no matter how far it's we try to be gracious and warm hearted and welcome and have coffee hours and give them eight times everything we do we bend our back and not pressure them too hard and yet there's a whole bunch of in-group language and there's bar structures and there's back quieting and all the political act things going on a whole bunch of stuff that just pisses people off and they just leave irrelevant even in a smaller church oh yeah in fact there are worse it's even harder to break into a smaller church than a big one you can go hide but if there's 300 people worshipping here you can go hide the Jews and get away with that a month so I mean if it's wrong we're going to you respond right here we used to talk about that what is it they talk about the mass coming together until it is so critical yeah you're critical mass of the congregation so that you can you can come in and so I mean that's that's it's a fascinating thing to try and think of how you know how this this fellow could bring that group of people into church or how that group of people could come into church which is what they obviously desperately need

I remember a bishop saying from the pulpit very recently that the most most place is to go into the coffee hour of the church yeah and one could believe that yeah because people gravitate towards the people I know because there are no groups well that's human well that's good on because otherwise we're going to add to the list of curses or it doesn't talk to anybody in the congregation or not coffee hour okay I want to look now at the passage that this has been pointing to which is Deuteronomy 27 so will you turn to

[94 : 40] Deuteronomy chapter 27 and uh we Kre and this is where we come back to the thing you were reading this morning Moses chapter 21 you see again the first verse we're back to the commands

Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people keep all these commands that I give you today when you have crossed the Jordan into the land your God into the land the Lord your God is giving you set up some large stones and coat them with plaster which I'm told was was an Egyptian technique I was to be a silent witness to the covenant Nancy you will remember St. John's York Mills I went to St. John's York Mills all my life as a child and there was always curtains across behind the communion table and there was always a great mystery as to what was behind those curtains and it was a church that was built in the 1820s or 30s somewhere back there and behind the curtains you know it was there at the time the amendments but the plaster was cracked in it you know it wasn't it wasn't very attractive so they put a lovely curtain in front

I don't know I don't know if that was symbolic that people didn't see it well we found out write on them the words of this law which you have crossed when you have crossed over to enter the land your God a land flowing with milk and honey that's the same land again just as the Lord the God of your father has promised you you know that when you go to Israel one of the things they point out in

their bitterness is that it may be a land flowing with milk and honey but since it's in the midst of a whole lot of other lands flowing with oil like we I just said there was a little oil what's that? well you go into this land you cross the Jordan you set up the stones on all evil as I commanded you today coat them with plaster build an altar to the Lord your God build an altar to the Lord your God an altar of stones do not use any iron stone any iron tool upon them Peter Craigie said that he's not sure why that is but it may be do you remember that story which one of you who's a good biblical scholar could look up for us the story of the Israelites having to go to was it to the Philistines to get their tools sharpened and that iron tools represented foreign domination so they tried not to use iron tools and also the idea that the stones were just as they came so to speak from the creation you didn't you didn't mar them by cutting them it wasn't it was just stone it wasn't creating an image somehow yeah yeah but I think it was just sort of natural yeah in that sense an altar do not use any iron tool build the altar for the Lord of the Lord your God with field stones and offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God which somebody has you know sort of go into the promised land and have a party sacrifice fellowship offerings there eating them and rejoicing in the presence of your Lord and you shall write very clearly all the words of the law on these stones that you have set up the this is this is Deuteronomy is made up of the teachings of of Exodus and Numbers and and and and then Deuteronomy was the preaching of what had been taught there and so that you know it's that the idea of preaching to review to help people keep in constant review the the the the narrative you know to keep bringing the narrative back to the people in ways that they can understand it more deeply and and understand it more profoundly they keep bringing them back to the narrative you know that's preached the gospel really and you know and I think the church gets into terrible trouble when it sets itself up as an authority on a whole sort all sorts of moral and ethical issues which you know which may be metaphor we all you you you