

## **group Bible Study – May 30, 2007**

### **Read Acts chapters 25-28**

**Reflection:** Bob Zurinsky, Campus Ministries

Well, we've come to the end of the book of Acts. I hope that your personal readings and meditations this quarter have been meaningful for you. Continue that discipline throughout the summer!

The book of Acts ends in a strange way: there is almost no conclusion at all! The apostle Paul is taken to Rome. He is imprisoned. He is preaching about Jesus and the kingdom of God. And then it's over! We don't find out what happened to Paul – we read nothing about his death in Rome. The book ends in the middle of the story. And this is strategic. It means that the Acts of the Apostles doesn't end with chapter 28 of this book... it continues on through history. It continues to our own time, and it includes us. And the story will continue on even after we're dead and gone.

How are we to understand this un-finished story that we are all part of?

The New Testament scholar NT Wright describes believers as actors who have been given only part of a script from which to work. It's as though a new Shakespeare play is discovered, but the last act is missing. So a group of actors is charged with the task of completing and performing the play – but how will they go about it?

Wright suggests that they must immerse themselves in all known works of Shakespeare until they know the way the author thinks from the inside out. They must devote themselves to the part of the script they have been given, until they understand and feel the plot in the depths of their own being. And then, after soaking in the story as they know it, they are ready to improvise the last act. They will use all of their own powers of creativity and all their insight into the mind of Shakespeare to produce a conclusion to the story that fits with, but is not identical to, all the preceding acts.

In the same way, the Christian community has been given a text (the Bible) and great wealth of tradition (Jewish and Christian history). Our job is to soak in it until we feel the plot deep in our bones. But we can't stop there. It is also our task to follow the trajectory of the story out beyond the text – to work out the last act in our lives and in our world. You and me – we are the next chapter of the story that God is writing in the world.

Life would be a lot easier and less confusing if we had a pre-written script to follow, word-for-word. But we don't have one. We haven't been given a script, but what we have been given is the very Spirit of Life within us. And so we set out to continue God's story in faithful yet creative ways. It is up to us to know what God has done in the past, to know the vision of what God has promised for the future of the earth – and then to live it.

I'm honored to be on this profound journey with all of you. See you next fall.