

Guest Lecture on Monday 21 October 2019

Introduction

As an ecumenical theologian I studied all my life the words of the Holy Scriptures. I am also very much interested in images, strengthening the power of expression of the words and the Word, and also the other way round.

In our present time it seems the culture of images becomes more and more important. We use words to express ourselves: we speak, we hear, we write, we read. But in the last centuries we live more and more in a time of images. One image can tell you more in a minute than many words.

My theme for today is: a Bible Story in words and in images. The Bible is interpreted by many interpreters and preachers in many books and sermons and meditations. My question is: How can images interpret these Bible stories?

As we all know our words will be outdated after a while. If you read a text from the Middle Ages in your own language, the language has changed so much during that long time, that you don't understand this text anymore. But images do not lose their expression. They have a clear message, also after ages.

I come from a Reformed tradition. In that tradition the combination from the Holy Scriptures and images was definitely not self-evident. One of the reasons could be the Protestant interpretation of Ex. 20:4.

The Old Testament prohibition of making images was taken maybe too literally. The iconoclastic year in the Netherlands (1566) is a specimen of it. This prohibition however was not really a hindrance, because also in Reformed circles there is a big interest in Biblical images. For me it is a big pleasure and a challenge to show you something of the correlation between the Words of the Bible and its images.

My lecture has three parts: Part I: the Prodigal son in different materials. Part II: The Prodigal son with different Central Figures. Part III: Grace.

Dr. Margriet Gosker, Venlo, the Netherlands