

Moving Forward ~ 2-28-2010

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-128; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35; Psalm 27

If you have ever taken a trip with young children you know that the question, “Are we almost there yet?” comes up often. We traveled all over the country with our three daughters on vacations and business trips. We would drive to Jekyll Island, Georgia or Portland, Maine or Fresno, California, or Philadelphia, or New York or Estes Park, Colorado or Tempe, Arizona and many places in-between, when they were growing up. Most of the trips were a lot of fun and my daughters remember them far more clearly than I do.

Whenever they would ask how much farther it would be until we ended our journey, I would be a little cautious in my responses. I would never tell them it would be eight more hours or exactly how many miles more, unless I wanted a rebellion. I usually would tell them we were somewhere in the middle. They became very good travelers who were patient with the journey knowing that it would end at a good destination.

During Lent we are on a journey with Jesus that is spelled out for us in the stories we find in the gospel accounts of these last few weeks of his life. We see him moving forward with his face set toward Jerusalem, the city that was known for killing its prophets. In the reading for this morning, we see that he is not quite ready for the final stage of his journey—all is not in place yet. There was more to do before he would lay down his life.

He tried to help those in Jerusalem understand his message and his mission. Those he wanted to reach, chose not to understand him and he was rejected by them. Those who were most resistant were the ones who were afraid that he was intent on overthrowing the status quo. They were not sure if he was after political power or simply wanted to destroy their religious institution. It is interesting that a group of Pharisees warned him about Herod. I am not certain why that was. Maybe those who told him of Herod’s intent had begun to understand that he was not there to destroy their faith but to give it added depth and strength. This is one of those questions to which we will, most likely, never know the answer.

Jesus was not scared off easily, he had a few more days of healing and teaching to do and he advised those who warned him to tell that “old fox” what he was about. Calling Herod an “old fox” was not a safe thing to do. So, he wisely retreated from Jerusalem to complete what he believed lay before him. He told those around him that they would not see him again until he made his entry into the city on the day we now celebrate as Palm Sunday. He needed to keep moving forward to accomplish all he had to do in the brief time that remained for him.

Abram, later to be known as Abraham, always seemed to be setting off on a journey and sometimes questioning if he was at his destination yet. God always nudged him along a little further—first when he left his native land to become a wandering Aramean and later as he was about to begin the journey of fatherhood. This was a journey he never believed he would be taking. But, everything is possible with God, even the birth of a child long after a mother and father have ceased to have hope. Because this part of

their journey was so foreign to Abram and Sarai, they laughed when they found out that an heir would be coming along. But, it happened, in the person of Isaac, whose name means “laughter.”

Moving forward through life and having a goal we strive for is important for the survival of each and every one of us. Having a sense of where we are going keeps us on track. We might think we would just like to laze through each day without considering an over-all goal, but that becomes old very soon. People that retire too early often find themselves searching for something to do that gives new meaning to their lives. Some never quite retire at all but move on to another area of their expertise in which they will feel useful. While there may be no schedule to keep, having something meaningful to do helps keep people alert and vital. Those who are most alive are those who understand that the journey is the most important thing. The process and its discoveries bring the most joy.

For every journey in life there is a beginning and there is an ending. This was true of Jesus and it is true of us. There is also the space in between known as “The Middle-Time.”* We are all in “The Middle-Time” and it is up to us to use it as fully as possible in service to God and to others. An anonymous author wrote about this time using these words:

*Between the exhilaration of Beginning...
And the satisfaction of Concluding,
Is the Middle-Time
of Enduring...Changing...Trying
Despairing...Continuing...Becoming*

*Jesus Christ was the Man of God’s Middle-Time
Between creation andAccomplishment.
Through him God said of Creation,
“Without mistake.”
And of Accomplishment,
“Without doubt.”*

*And we in our Middle-Time
Of wondering and waiting
hurrying and hesitating,
regretting and revising-
We who began many things...
And have seen but few completed--*

*We who are becoming more...and less---
Through the evidence of God's Middle-Time
Have a stabilizing hint
That we are not mistakes,
That we are irreplaceable,
That our Being is of interest,
And our Doing is of purpose,
That our Being and our Doing
Are surrounded by Amen.*

*Jesus Christ is the Completer
Of unfinished people
With unfinished work
In unfinished times.*

*May he keep us from sinking, from ceasing,
From wasting, from solidifying,
That we may be for him
Experimenters, Enablers, Encouragers,
And Associates in Accomplishment.*

Amen

*Shared by David Gray, 2/27/1982 in Anaheim, CA