

On The Road Again

Most of us like to travel. As a matter of fact, the touring/tourist industries have grown to such an extent that in many places, tourism is one of the largest and most important 'industries'. It must have something to do with the experience of moving beyond the normal parameters of our lives and experiencing locations which are exciting, historic, recreational, or even yes, spiritual.

The bible is full of travel stories. Some are great and epic sagas: Abraham and Sarah leaving their secure home behind to start a new life in "retirement"; the Israelites wondering during the Exodus from Egypt into the Promised Land; the Holy Family making their way to Bethlehem for the census; the quest of the Magi; Jesus on pilgrimage with his parents to Jerusalem; Paul on the road to Damascus when he is blinded as he hears the voice of Jesus calling him.

In each case, the journey can be understood as a metaphor for the many journeys and passages we undertake in our lives. Each can be full of challenge and hardship. Yet, these journeys can often be occasions for new perspective, growth, and productive change.

Thinking about such "life journeys" here are some thoughts 'for the road'!

-The journey will not be completely 'mapped out'. This is to say, that we aren't in control and there will always be surprises. Not that we wouldn't like to have a roadmap. And one can certainly lay claim to the Scripture and other spiritual resources to take on the journey. But, as Jesus said to his nervous disciples, "It is not for you to know the time or the place.." Maybe, that's just as well!

-The journey will not always be easy. Perhaps, that goes without saying. Except that we seem to be conditioned to comfortable transportation and gracious accommodations along the way. How inspiring to remember that many great people have had to overcome huge obstacles and personal deficiencies. Their greatness can be measured by the obstacles over which they came.

-We make the journeys of life in stages. It might seem as if we can linger in one stage for some time and nothing much changes. Then suddenly, we are moving as if from one stepping stone to another. As we shift our weight to the next stage, we will be vulnerable. It will be especially in these moments when we will be most open to God's abiding presence and grace in our lives.

-We must never travel alone. Yes, relationship is the glue which holds us together. And some relationships will hurt or impede our progress forward. One way or the other, we are stuck with one another! In the tight bonds of friendship and love, we always discover that our fellow pilgrims are just about as important as our destination.

-We must travel 'light'. All of our journeys are temporary. Yet, we so easily become too comfortable, or maybe, too infatuated with the status quo that we miss opportunities for new growth. All the "things" easily weigh us down and prevent us from making progress on the road. Laying them aside, we discover new energy.

-Finally, as Christians we remember that there is indeed a destination. Yes, Jesus declared that we would share in "abundant life" in the "Kingdom of God". But he also reminded us that the destination is not merely a place of blessedness, peace, and reward in the Resurrection. Transformation doesn't have to wait until we die. Now is the time to be trusting, courageous, open, forgiving and loving. The journey is also the destination.

This Wednesday we begin the annual pilgrimage of Lent. This is the season to reflect and renew. This is our spring training. It is time to stretch the muscles, go back to the basics, and get out in the field again. But you must be intentional about it. Lent is another spiritual journey.

Only remember- our Lord will also be on the road with us. Expect his presence. Listen for his voice.

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