

ROAD TRIP: WHERE ARE YOU HEADED? #4 MISSION

Hebrew 11:1-3, 8-10, 32-40 & Matthew 4:18-22

A couple of weeks ago, I shared with you that, when it comes to travelling, I plan everything down to the smallest detail. I even schedule the bathroom breaks. "*Just hold on*" say I, as we drive past the rest area my passengers have asked about, "*Only another 100 kilometres to go until we stop.*" Yes, I know. It's surprising I'm still alive!

Here's something else you probably don't know about me. I am a huge Star Trek fan, especially *Star Trek Voyager*. That series ran for seven years, and there's a great line in the final episode. The crew of Voyager has just arrived home to save the earth after years of "*going where no-one had ever gone before*". They are taking some time to reflect on their arrival home, and that's when Ensign Harry Kim says this:

"When I think about everything we've been through together, maybe it's not the destination that matters, maybe it's the journey, and if that journey takes a little longer, so we can do something we all believe in, I can't think of any place I'd rather be, or any people I'd rather be with."

I really like that thought because it reminds me of Abraham's journey of faith in the Old Testament. Hebrew 11:8 describes it this way, "**By an act of faith, Abraham said yes to God's call to travel to an unknown place that would become his home. When he left he had no idea where he was going.**" "*Maybe it's not the destination that matters, maybe it's the journey*". Think about that in terms of your faith. Faith is not a destination. Faith is what you need for the journey. We are told in Scripture to "**live by faith**". (Hebrews 10:38). To "**live by faith**". Nowhere in the Bible does it say that faith is something that you "do" just once.

Yes, we all need to turn from our sin and accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour but that first step is simply the beginning of the journey of faith. It's not the end of it. Once we come to faith, we must live the rest of our lives "by faith". That's why we read in James 2:14 (NLT), "**What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone?**"

Faith is the journey, not the destination. Think of it this way. It is the path way to the destination. Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) reminds us, "**And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come**

to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him." As Christian every day is a walk of faith. Every day, our faith is tested and challenged. Every day, our faith is subject to the devil's temptations. Every day, we must choose whether to live by the world's standards, or to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

In Galatians Chapter 5, the apostle Paul, describes the underbelly of human nature. He says it shows itself in immoral, filthy and indecent actions. It is seen in people who are fighting and divisive, filled with jealousy, anger, ambition, and hatred. Paul then goes on to remind us as Christians that we are to let the Holy Spirit direct our lives, so we will not satisfy those desires of the human nature. He writes, **"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives."** I love the way that The Message translation translates that last verse. It says, **"Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives."**

"Work out its implications in every detail of our lives." That's what living by faith is all about. It's about preparing us for the destination. So, *"Maybe it's not the destination that matters, maybe it's the journey"*. The destination is simply the goal we strive for. Why is that true? Because life itself is a journey. Whether we travel willingly or life drags us along, there is no standing still. And it's pretty clear to me that being a disciple of Jesus is a journey. I think we all know that. It's about growing and maturing and becoming complete in Christ. That's why we have a popular expression that says, **"Please be patient. God isn't finished with me yet."**

The evidence for that is found in every book of the Bible. Simply, examine the lives of spiritual giants like Abraham, Moses, David, Naomi, Peter or Paul. Their lives of faith all read very much like a journey. The apostle Paul, was honest about that. Philippians 3:12-13 (NLT), **"12 I do not say that I have received this or have already become perfect. But I keep going on to make that life my own as Christ Jesus made me His own. 13 No, Christian brothers, I do not have that life yet. But I do one thing. I forget everything that is behind me and look forward to that which is ahead of me."** Now did you notice that Paul, writing in the present,

spoke also about the past and the future? He's simply saying here, that faith is a journey, not a destination. That faith is lived out in the here and now.

Over the forty years of my ministry, I have often noted the peace and quiet assurance of those who have been Christians for many, many years. Why is that? I don't think it's simply because these senior saints are older in years. I think it's because they are more experienced in the faith. They have learned the lessons of the journey of faith. They have learned through that journey to trust God more and more. As Hebrew 11:1 (GNB) puts it, ***"To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see."***

When Jesus called his first disciples, this is the life he called them to. This is the journey he called them to. And this is the life, and the journey, he calls you and me to. John 12:46, ***"I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark."***

There is another word we can use for the journey of faith and discipleship. You all know it. It's called our *"mission"*. Just as the crew of the Starship Voyager had a mission, we also have a divinely appointed mission. According to the dictionary, the word *"mission"*, means *"an assignment."* Mission is a task, or a duty, that is to be fulfilled. Mission shapes our life of faith. Here are two specific things Jesus said to us so our mission would have a focus, the first is in Matthew 28:18-20 (Msg). We call it the great commission.

"God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

The second is found in the closing lines of the Parable Jesus told about the sheep and the goats, the story of what happens on the Day of Judgement to those who help others and those who do not. Matthew 25:37 (Msg):

'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.'

With those two Scripture passages in mind here is what The Presbyterian Church in Canada believes about our mission as Christians, about what the journey of faith looks like.

**As God sent Christ to us,
so God sends us into the world.
We are here to proclaim Christ in word and deed.**

**Mission is evangelism,
the offer of salvation to all people,
in the power of the Holy Spirit,
to be received through faith in Christ.
It asks people to repent of their sins,
to trust Christ,
to be baptized,
and to enter a life honouring Jesus as Lord.**

**Mission is service,
a call to help people in need and
to permeate all of life with the compassion of God.**

c. The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Living Faith 9.1

Witness and service. This is what our faith journey is supposed to look like. *"Maybe it's not the destination that matters, maybe it's the journey"*. The life of faith, for Christians, is the journey. The destination, being with God for all eternity, is simply the reward for living a faithful life in the service of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

Pastoral Prayer

God of the journey,
you called Abram to leave his homeland and to go to a land that existed only in your promise.
You called Moses to step out of his comfort zone and to lead your people out of slavery and into their promised land.
And when your people ended up in exile because of their sin, you led them out of exile that they might return to their homeland.
Then on the road to Emmaus our risen Lord Jesus journeyed with two confused disciples before revealing himself to them in the breaking of bread.

God of our faith journey,
walk with us, guide us and direct us;
that we may live by faith,
and grow to maturity in Christ.

Be with those who struggle on the journey of faith.
Those who are overwhelmed by doubt.
Those who have more questions than answers.
Those who let the worries of this life overwhelm their faith.
Those who have been hurt and disappointed by your church.

Give strength for the journey to all those;
who are grieving the loss of a loved one;
dealing with a serious illness;
coping with the break-up of a relationship,
or struggling to deal with a difficult person.

May our journey of faith bring us into your presence
as we live out your mission in our lives,
In Jesus name. Amen.