

Are We There Yet? February 25th, 2024

Let us pray,
May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord,
our light and our way. Amen.

Last week for Family Day, we took a trip to Calgary in our car to visit my in-laws – Granny and Grandpa as they are affectionately known in our house.

Who has driven from Calgary to Saskatoon? With about three pit stops, it takes seven hours for us to drive from our home in Saskatoon to Granny and Grandpa's on the northwest side of Calgary. On Saturday morning, we got up early, and on the road before sunrise. We were driving about 15 minutes – half-way to Delisle- when we heard it. A voice from the backseat- The voice said – “Are we there yet?”

Can we say that together? **Are we there yet?**

With only six hours and forty-five minutes to go, it could be a lot worse. Are we there yet. Are we there yet means, I'm bored. I'm sick of driving. My legs are cramped. My brother is bugging me. Do we really have to go through all this? Can't we just be there now?

Are we there yet.

When we're thinking, “*are we there yet*” the discomfort of the present moment seems too much- and we lose sight of our goal. Up in the front seat- we have a different perspective, though it's still seven hours, it's seven hours we have driven before. In the front seat, we remind the backseat of the ultimate goal. We mention our progress- look! Kindersley! We point out the snowy owl on the telephone pole and the bison farm and the sky. We sing ridiculous songs. From the front seat, we *cannot make the journey shorter*, but we can help the backseat not to fight, to notice how far we've come, to find joy on the road. We get ice cream.

In the season of Lent, that we are in right now, we very often hear the word journey. *We say we are on a Lenten Journey*. And there's a reason we do that. More than any other time of the year, the scriptures in this season describe the journeying, adventuring, voyaging, travelling, seeking of God's people, our ancestors.

Last week we read about Noah and his family. Remember they were in a big boat while it rained and flooded for forty days and nights before going out onto the dry land to start their lives over again? This week, we meet Abraham and Sarah, and hear about the beginning of their journey, in their old age- to becoming parents, and the father and mother of many- and their journey towards the promised land.

Soon we will read about the forty-year journey of the children of Israel as they followed Moses to freedom and looked for a place to settle down. And always, as Christians, we contemplate the journey of Jesus.

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus' life and ministry begins with a journey to the wilderness where he is tempted and hungry for forty days. We follow him on his journey towards the cross, where those he challenged and threatened along the way would kill him. And the journey to Easter morning, when those who loved him, would rejoice to see that the journey was not over.

In today's gospel, Jesus tells Peter about what is ahead on his journey. Mark writes, *Jesus began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.*

Here, Jesus is giving the disciples a heads up about *how difficult* his journey will be- and Peter rebukes him. Rebuke is a word we normally only use when we're reading the bible, but it means to disapprove of strongly or criticize. Peter's probably saying something like-

Great suffering? Rejection? Death?

That's a little extreme.

Surely there's another way!

You don't actually have to die do you Jesus?

Seriously?

And that's when Jesus says- *"Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*

Jesus is saying this journey is hard and there's no getting away from that. And it's not going to go well for you if you want to avoid everything that is difficult. This is the way to get where we are going.

Peter is like all of us who ride in the back seat. We want to get there now- without the hard part. But Jesus says no. *We walk the difficult road. We journey the whole distance. We face every challenge along the way.* That's what our ancestors did - Noah in the ark – Abraham and Sarah – The children of Israel whined and complained the whole way to the promised land but it still took forty years.

In this season, we remember that being believers and followers of God, does not get us anywhere faster than anyone else. And it does not mean we ride first class. We journey through complicated relationships. We find our way to and from jobs the same as everyone else. We wait for children. We worry about when they will call. We get sick, and so do our loved ones.

Grief is a journey. The journey toward justice will take our whole life. Peace is a journey. Are we there yet? No. But like Jesus, we are called to walk towards it anyway. **We are journeying.**

In his book, *Yes And... Daily Meditations*, Father Richard Rohr, an ecumenical teacher and Franciscan friar says it like this-

"Christianity is a lifestyle—a way of being in the world that is simple, nonviolent, shared, and loving."

Christianity is not a different car to a different place. Christianity is how we act in the back seat. In the book of Acts we hear that in the beginning, Christianity was called *The Way*. Christians were known as people who belonged to *The Way*

In the gospel of John, we hear Jesus describe himself as *The Way*. To be people of faith, is to be on the way to somewhere, to be explorers, to be adventurers, to seek. We are sojourners our whole lives and maybe after. And we don't need to waste our time asking if we're there yet. Because God's in the car with us. *No matter what* we are journeying through, no matter how hard the road gets, God is with us.

And Jesus has lived the human journey, the suffering and the joy - and wants to guide us on this path. For Noah- it was the sign of the rainbow- that told him God was present when his family were putting together their lives after a total disaster. For Abraham, and Sarah, it was the stars in the sky that reminded them that miracles were still possible – even in their nineties. For some people I know, it's fried chicken from the gas station in Delisle that gives a sense that just maybe, we're going to make it after all.

On this Lenten journey, on your Lenten journey, on your life's journey, I invite you to consider how far you have already come, to give thanks for your companions on the road. Look around this room, we're doing this together. And my prayer is that we may all be people of *the way*, people who try not to fight, who seek peace. People who share. People who don't just think about getting there, but who love one another, and who love the journey. And always, Let us be the people who sing in the car.

Amen.

Rev. Emily Carr