

“A Journey Worth Taking”

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

First Tuesday in Lent

Ecumenical Lunch Worship Series



Luke 9:51 (NRSV)

“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

[MESSAGE]

If you follow the liturgical calendar, you know that the Sunday before Ash Wednesday is Transfiguration Sunday.

On that day, we remember when Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a mountain and revealed his divine identity.

This event takes place after he has told the disciples that it is time for him to return to Jerusalem and suffer death at the hands of the Romans.

From that point, Jesus is determined to go to Jerusalem and his final journey begins.

That is also how Lent begins for the church.

We spend these forty days on a journey, often wondering where Jesus is asking us to go.

Let us pray...Lord, as we walk through Lent this year, we ask for your guidance. Take us with you on this journey to Jerusalem and give us the courage to persevere. In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

It's interesting, I think, to notice that most of Jesus' ministry is "*on the move.*"

He is always on the way to somewhere and he asks people to follow him.

If you think about it, I'm sure you can come up with your favorite story of Jesus on the road to someplace, or telling a story about someone on a journey.

Jesus and his followers travelled throughout the region, not staying in any one place for very long.

There was a sense of urgency about his ministry that ultimately led Jesus to take this one last trip to Jerusalem.

For the church, the Season of Lent offers us the opportunity to **participate** in Jesus' journey.

Our participation may take many forms and cause us to consider some challenging truth.

Lent is a journey of self-examination, of confession, of humility, of tears.

The journey challenges us to walk in the footsteps of Jesus through wilderness, sorrow, and pain.

Along the way, we may want to step off the journey's path for something easier.

We must remember that the journey holds the promise of redemption and resurrection if we stay the course and complete it.

You may have heard that the early followers of Jesus were not at first called "*Christians*" and their gathering was not called "*church*."

There was a time when the followers of Jesus were simply called, “*The Way*.”

It was about a *way of living* that was different from the culture in which they lived.

It was about *actively* pursuing the values that Jesus taught.

“*The Way*” was a movement, not a church.

Today, we are gathered here as members of different congregations.

Many of us have probably forgotten the church history about whatever division led to the formation of our particular denomination.

What we can probably agree on is that, whatever disagreement there was, it was probably human in origin.

This year, during Lent, our church is discussing the seven last words Jesus spoke while hanging on the cross.

The first “word” was, “*Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they’re doing.*”

This was a prayer between Jesus and God the Father; I believe it was a prayer for all people.

As Jesus gave up his life, he looked out on the world that he loved and realized that, for the most part, *we don't have a clue*.

He prayed that God would forgive us and help us.

He wasn't praying for any small group of believers; he was praying for all of us, the people who loved him, the people who hated him, and the people who put him to death.

None of us knew what we were doing, so all of us are united in our guilt.

I believe that the things that unite us in the love of Jesus Christ far outweigh whatever divides us in the pettiness of humanity.

We are not in competition with each other over what doctrines are more correct.

We are in competition with evil forces in the world that seek to distract and divide us.

We have become fearful and isolated within the walls of our churches, when we need to be on a journey with Jesus into places where darkness swallows light and despair craves hope.

Being a follower of Christ is not a passive, spectator sport; it is an active journey of discovery.

When Jesus calls us to follow him, he means that we must go where he goes, doing ministry where the people are.

Jesus sets the example by talking with everyone, no matter who they are, what they've done, or what they believe.

Jesus goes to the people and loves them.

Jesus told his disciples, "*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*"

He did **not** say, "they will know you are Methodists, or Presbyterians, or Catholics, or Episcopalians; *they will know you are mine when they see how you love.*"

These days it is sometimes hard to see how people
love; we seem to have lost sight of “*The Way*.”

So, our journey is a journey that leads us to love,
to give, to support, and to reach out.

It is a journey that takes us out of our places of
comfort and into places of uncertainty.

Jesus calls us out to walk with him and the journey
he leads may be difficult, but it ultimately ends
with redemption and resurrection.

It is, most certainly, a journey worth taking.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**