

“On the Way...”
(Rom A. Pegram, 2/21/16)

Folks, last week we kicked off the season of Lent by talking about Jesus’ decision to go to Jerusalem and face the end of his life. As the NRSV translates it, Jesus ‘set his face to go to Jerusalem’; he was determined to reach that destination because he knew that if he did ... he’d be fulfilling God’s will for his life, saving us in the process. So, down the road he went, from that lonely mountain in Galilee, south to Jerusalem...

But I want you to know something today. Just because Jesus made the unalterable decision to go to Jerusalem—to face a horrible death, *this did not mean that his ministry came to an end!* All 4 gospels show us that his entire ministry—as he was ‘on the way’ between Galilee & Jerusalem—demonstrated the heartbeat of his ministry ... *God’s heart of justice, mercy and love...*

...And today, we’re going to take a look at what Jesus was up to as he was ... ‘on the way’. But before we get started, I want you to know this: *You and I are ‘on the way’ too.* And if Jesus was about certain things—even as he was ‘on the way’ to his end—then *you and I should be about these things, too.* For Jesus said (Matt. 10:24-25a, NLT), “Students are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. ²⁵ Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master.” So what was Jesus up to as he was ‘on his way’? First, let’s look at...

THE HEALINGS OF JESUS. Folks, Jesus had an extremely compassionate heart—compassion given to him by the Father, through the Spirit that lived in him... And guess what? You and I can be filled with that same Spirit of compassion!

Because much of Jesus’ ministry—primarily in the northern region of Galilee—involved healing, some refer to Jesus as ‘The Great Physician’ (Luke 4:23; Matt. 9:12-13). Do you remember last week, when Jesus came down the mountain after the Transfiguration, he took time to heal a young boy who’d had seizures (Luke 9:37-43). Do you remember that? Well, those healings continued along the way... Let me give you some more examples: First...

THE WOMAN IN THE SYNAGOGUE – Jesus went to the synagogue to teach. While there, a woman slipped in—a lady so severely crippled that she couldn’t even stand up straight. The story tells us she’d been crippled for over 18 years (Luke 13:10-17)! And here’s what’s going on behind the scenes...

Over the years, in an effort to keep God’s laws, religious leaders had made up other laws so folks could actually keep the 3rd Commandment, “Keep the Sabbath day and treat it as holy” (Deut. 5:12). So, we’ve got laws on top of laws on top of laws. Over the years, their laws had become very complicated. So, what happened?

Those who challenged Jesus’ healing on this day believed—because of their laws on top of laws—that he’d dishonored the Sabbath. Jesus placed his hands on this crippled woman ... and she straightened up at once and praised God (Luke 13:10-13)! And Jesus looked those religious leaders in the eye—those accusing him—and here’s what he said (Luke 13:15-16, NLT):

“But the Lord replied, ‘You hypocrites! Each of you works on the Sabbath day! Don’t you untie your ox or your donkey from its stall on the Sabbath and lead it out for water? ¹⁶ This dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years. Isn’t it right that she be released, even on the Sabbath?’”

The opponents were silenced & the crowd rejoiced! Verse 17 says, “This shamed his enemies, but all the people rejoiced at the wonderful things he did.” Luke goes on to tell us, even as Jesus traveled south, he continued to perform miracles, like this...

THE HEALING OF THE 10 LEPERS in Luke 17 (11-13, NLT)...

“As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. ¹² As he entered a village there, ten lepers stood at a distance, ¹³ crying out, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’”

In those days, people infected with leprosy and other skin diseases were considered ‘unclean’—*outcasts from society* (i.e. couldn’t go to market, couldn’t go to Temple, etc.). So, Jesus—*full of compassion*—took pity on them & healed them—one of them being a *Samaritan* ... actually returned to thank Jesus!

Folks, these powerful healings took place while Jesus was ‘on the way’ to his death (Luke 17:11-19). “Oh, excuse me, Jesus ... I know you’re headed to your death, but could I trouble you a moment?” *His ministry never stopped ... and neither should ours!*

There are so many in our world today that are sick & dying! And, if God’s love & compassion extends to all people—everywhere, then *shame on us if ours doesn’t do the same! WE ARE THE HANDS AND FEET OF JESUS!* In John 14:12, Jesus tells Philip: “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.”

The truth is ... *Christianity’s done its part over the years and we need to continue.* For 20+ centuries, there’ve been monasteries all over Europe focused on caring for the sick & dying. Wesley and the Early Methodists reached out to ‘the least of these’ and gave healing care. Hospitals started all over our country by the Church—like St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Memphis ... or the Methodist Hospital System, Indianapolis, Houston, and other places...

In the spirit of Christ—the Great Physician, we need to continue his healing ministries as we’re ‘on the way’. *I believe Jesus would be pleased with that!* Then as Jesus was ‘on the way’ to his final destination, we also witness this...

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS. Remember: Every obstacle was an opportunity for Jesus to teach ... and Jesus taught and explained God’s truth through parables ... even as he was ‘on the way’, *wanting everyone to hear, know and understand God’s word!*

Unfortunately, *biblical illiteracy* is huge today! A 2009 Barna study tells us this: “By the time most Americans reach the age of 13 or 14, they *think* they pretty much know everything of value the Bible has to teach. ... In a culture driven by the desire to

receive value, more Bible teaching is generally not viewed as an exercise in providing such value.”

Well, many years ago, the OT prophet Amos warned that there’d be a time in the future when people would absolutely thirst for God’s word (Amos 8:11-12, NLT). Listen:

“The time is surely coming,” says the Sovereign LORD, “when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread or water but of hearing the words of the LORD. ¹² People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from border to border searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.”

People have been known to stagger for many reasons ... but what Amos is talking about here is *the desert ... and trying to survive it without water. That’s what God’s word is to our souls!* It’s that important. Folks, **Jesus’ teachings are basic to the understanding of what it means to be a Christian.** And the Gospels give many examples of Jesus’ teachings as he was ‘on the way’, like...

The Good Samaritan – Jesus tells this parable in response to a lawyer’s inquiry about how to gain eternal life. The conversation brought up the commandments (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18) which Luke records in 10:27 (NLT): “...‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Jesus’ response to the question ‘Who is my neighbor?’ turned the tables by letting his audience know that *we are the neighbors* who must care for the needs of others—a true reflection of Jesus’ heart... Here’s another:

The Pharisees were continually challenging Jesus, one day asking him about **divorce** (Matt. 19:6-11). But Jesus turned this conversation around and talked about God’s view of **marriage** instead—in a new way, a way that really showed compassion for women in particular—the kind we’re to show others...

Those are but a couple examples of what Jesus taught. But if there’s one thing central to all of Jesus’ teachings, it’s this: **The Lord not only wants us to know his words and to live out his words, but also to teach them to others.** Jesus said (Matt. 7:24): “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.” *That’s who we need to be—teaching others to do the same.* As Jesus continued ‘on the way’ to Jerusalem, he ministered in one more very practical way. And we find that in...

THE FEEDINGS OF JESUS. Yep, sometimes Jesus was also in charge of the food! Hunger was prevalent in Israel in Jesus’ day. The Hebrews had miraculous ‘manna’ during their 40 years in the wilderness ... but after they arrived in the Promised Land, drought often took its toll on the crops and pastures. Men lost their tiny farms and were often forced into slavery, or worked for an occasional meal. Widows & orphans were generally destitute. The Roman Empire didn’t help; they levied huge taxes ... and the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. *Jesus understood hunger in this context!*

And during his ministry, on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus miraculously fed crowds of 4,000 and 5,000. An important line in the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray, of course, is: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11, NRSV). Daily nourishment is important ... and *Jesus got that!*

Then, in one of the most dramatic teachings about hunger (Matt. 25), Jesus talks about himself being hungry and given food to eat, thirsty and given a drink. ‘When did that happen, Jesus?’ And the response was (v. 40): “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’” *Jesus understood hunger*; he cares about those who are hungry! And he made time for this ‘on the way’ to Jerusalem...

As I wrap up this morning, I want to say that *Jesus cares about hunger in our community too!* Did you know that? You and I are ‘on the way’ too; most of us are busy with work & family, but while we’re ‘on the way’ to our final destination ... we need to be concerned about those who are hungry—physically and spiritually. And we have the perfect opportunities to help here in Lomira through giving financially to our local **Compassionate Fund** or giving of our time to our **Food Pantry** (amongst other things). There’s always something we can do that can make a huge difference in the lives of others. Jesus had ‘set his face’—determined to get to Jerusalem ... but people mattered, even ‘on the way’. The bottom line is, ***Jesus’ compassion for people never wavered ... and neither should ours...***

As Jesus shares one of his final teachings (Matt. 25:35-36), involving sheep & goats, he says to the sheep: “For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.”

What are our lives going to be about as we’re ‘on the way’ to our final destination? As Jesus traveled—though focused on his destination, he took time to heal & care for the sick, teach the ways of God, and feed the hungry. And *as we travel through this life of ours—to our final destination, I’m pretty sure Jesus expects the same from us...*