

Proper 8 Sermon

Now one of the things which I love most of all is going on holiday. The idea of visiting something new, of taking time to recharge the batteries – a time to think, to wonder, to reflect. Time to visit places of interest, or walk along the sandy beach. Holidays can be such a time of relaxation – but to get to the ideal spot you need to go on that journey. I say that journey, because, although I love to travel miles in the car – thoughts of the journey ahead are always tinged by that little voice in the back saying “are we there yet” when we have only just left the road we live in. Or that voice that rings out – just as you have moved to the outside lane of the motorway – I think I am going to be sick? Or everybody being crammed into the car (including dog and kitchen sink) and playing the I spy games a million times. Journeys can be both exciting and difficult. St Teresa of Avila, spent many years of travelling on God’s Business. Teresa of Ávila, also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, lived in the 16th century. She spent much of her life Founding and reforming convents. She took journeys on her own that were both unsafe and uncomfortable – but she was never daunted. However there is a very famous story that one day she was very near the end of her tether with weariness, her carriage broke and she fell out of it into the mud. She is reported to have shouted at God, “No wonder you have so few friends”.

Journeys as we know can be very difficult. And our reading today marks a turning point Jesus’ journey.

His journey so far includes his Baptism, he had been tempted and tested, he had gathered his disciples, and he had taught extensively and also healed as we heard last week. However from this point, Jesus’s face points towards Jerusalem. In terms of his ministry he is if you like on the home stretch – now we all know that any journey we go on, will have highs and lows, easy and enjoyable parts and also challenging parts. But for us, when we are on our final journey – home after a break – the journey doesn’t seem too bad. But for Jesus, the journey becomes much harder. You see, the beginning of this Gospel hints at what is to come.

As we heard in our Gospel, some of those accompanying Jesus are given a specific task – to go ahead of the group into Samaritan Village and make preparations for his visit. Now the popularity of Jesus had grown immensely and no doubt they were expecting the same euphoric welcome, but instead of encountering a warm welcome – the mood has changed, and they immediately met with rejection. Our passage does not tell us why – but the opposition was formidable.

James and John were very shocked. They proposed retaliation for their response, proposing to consume them with fire from heaven – but Jesus rebuked them. Now simply was not the time for judgement on Samaria.

Then come the encounters with the three would be disciples.

The first seems determined enough, but Jesus confronts him with the insecurity and homelessness of the son of man.

The second, Jesus takes the initiative and sharply responds to his excuse about family obligations. It may seem to be very harsh – but to follow Jesus is about total commitment which will affect the whole of your life.

The third professes commitment, but couples it with delaying tactics. Not now, maybe later

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You see Discipleship involves a very heavy commitment –the way Jesus takes, the journey he goes on, involves an unprotected mission, a clear choice about priorities, and a clean break with the past.

Discipleship involves going on a journey with Jesus – and that journey can be at times be a hard one. You see following Jesus does not always meet our expectations – just because you follow him does not mean a passport to an easy life. Just because we freely respond to God’s call does not mean that our paths are smoothed and everything that gets in our way, or causes a problem is dealt with. Far from it. But like every other journey it will have highs and lows.

Our journey through life set against time itself is short and fleeting. It is a journey of discipleship in which Jesus leads us to our true home.

In our Gospel reading Jesus turned for home – he calls us to journey with him. He calls us at our baptism, at our confirmation - reminding us that it is not a little stroll on a Sunday morning, but a daily walk with him.

It is a journey that involves daily sacrifices. He supplies us with his own body and blood to sustain us. This journey we walk, can involve rejection, pain, suffering, and abuse as well as denying our own selfish wants and desires. Following Jesus will affect the way in which we respond to people – instead of calling down judgement on them; we show them the fruits of the spirit such as love, joy, peace, kindness, and self-control in the hope that it may well encourage them to join us. What our journey is not about is excuses as to why we can’t. It’s about stepping out into that boat – with faith

You see the journey with Jesus isn’t over until you breathe your final breathe – trusting in God’s promise of salvation – trusting Jesus has already led you through death into life eternal with him.

So as we worship this morning and we walk daily with him, rest assured that Jesus will carry you through the most difficult parts of the journey.

Rest assured when you enter the gates of heaven, Jesus has already paid the entry fee by his own suffering and death.

Rest assured the he’ll give you the strength you need to endure the journey as you head toward your heavenly home.

Amen