

June 26, 2016 — “Are We Traveling Together & Are We Traveling Forward?”

St. Stephen UCC/Louisville, KY/The Rev. Jim Harper III

WORDS FROM THE BACK

**NO MATTER WHO WE ARE
AND WHERE WE ARE ON LIFE’S JOURNEY,
YOU AND I ARE WELCOME
IN THIS SPACE
DURING THIS HOUR**

**People of Faith...
Let us worship God together
in this hour, in this space!**

PASSING OF THE PEACE

Lowrider War

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ro4yhp9L6Ok&list=PLnOLHK8zL11YHKxoW91gMY5GoeYDpcpZv>

CELEBRATION OF FAITH AND OUR LIFE OF FAITH

SCRIPTURE OF THE DAY/

Luke 9:51-62

Jesus sets out for Jerusalem

51 As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, he determined to go to Jerusalem. 52 He sent messengers on ahead of him. Along the way, they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival, 53 but the Samaritan villagers refused to welcome him because he was determined to go to Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to consume them?” 55 But Jesus turned and spoke sternly to them, 56 and they went on to another village.

Following Jesus

57 As Jesus and his disciples traveled along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

58 Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Human One has no place to lay his head.”

59 Then Jesus said to someone else, “Follow me.”

He replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

60 Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and spread the news of God’s kingdom.”

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61 Someone else said to Jesus, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those in my house.”

62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.”

— Common English Bible (CEB)
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SONG OF FAITH

No Matter (printed)

Luke 9:51-62 (The Cotton Patch Version of the Bible)

51. Now when the days for his arrest approached, he set his heart on going to Atlanta. He sent the arrangements committee on ahead, and on the way they stopped in a black community to find accommodations. But they refused to accept Jesus' party, because there were white people in it.

When Jim and Jack saw this, they said, "Sir, do you want us to give them the 'fire-from-heaven' treatment and bump 'em off?" But Jesus turned and scolded them, and they went on to another town.

57. While they were going along the way, somebody said to him, "I'll live your life, regardless of where it takes me."

58. Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to hang his hat." Then he said to another, "Share my life."

"Okay," he said, "but let me first discharge my family obligations.

“Jesus told him, "Let the people of the world care for themselves, but you, you spend your time promoting the God Movement.” Still another said, "I will share your life, sir, but let me first work things out with my relatives.”

To him Jesus replied, "No man who commits himself to a course of action, and then keeps looking for a way out of it, is fit material for the God Movement.”

— Excerpt From: Clarence Jordan. "Cotton Patch Gospel: Luke and Acts." iBooks. <https://itun.es/us/2-6Rz.l>

MEDITATION

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Give ALOHA.....it doesn't cost anything!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5z5ZfyOYQb0>

Mayor Billy Kenoi giving the commencement speech for Hawaii Pacific University graduating class of 2014. — Pretty right on, yea?



You and I would never try to drive our cars by using the rear-view mirror as our only view of the road that we are traveling — but so many of us do this in matters of faith.

So many of us, in matters of faith (and in our lives too) spend so much time looking backwards, but that is not a faithful action — that is not what God created us to do.

Jesus said in this parable explanation —

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“No man who commits himself to a course of action, and then keeps looking for a way out of it, is fit material for the God Movement.”

As it reads in the Common English Version: Jesus said to them and to us today, *“No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.”*

To many of us are tempted to look backwards for comfort and direction and tradition — but, like Jesus says and like Jesus demonstrates, we need to set our faces forward and journey the road that lies ahead of us.



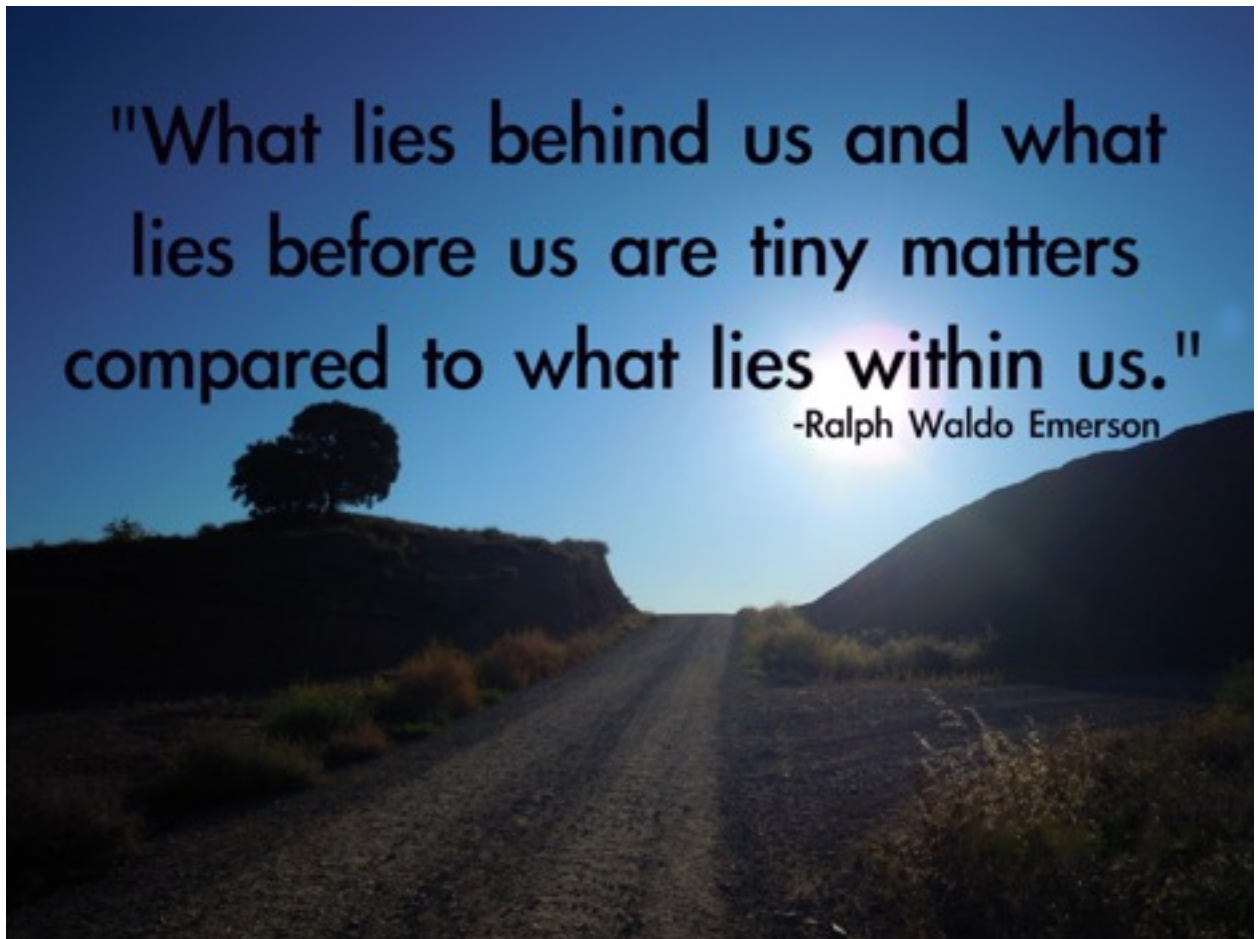
- Jesus had spent the last 30 years with family and friends.
- Jesus had just spent the last 3 years in ministry and in community with his disciples.
- Jesus now knew that what lied before him was not going to be easy, but it was necessary.

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- Jesus was facing the trip to Jerusalem, and he knew what laid ahead; but he also knew that he had the strength he needed because God was with him.

You and I are not alone.



We are not alone, and if we set our faces forward (like Jesus did) and journey the road that lies ahead of us — we too have God with us.

The real key to this is spending as much time with God that we always are aware of God.

That is one of the most productive things we can do in our lives and in our lives of faith — spending as much time with God!

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Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.” — SO MOVE FORWARD!

Life is a haul!

Life without faith is twice the haul, for me is unimaginable!

Anne Lamott says... “In the long haul, grace will win out over everything, over the misery, the stupidity, the dishonesty.”

So in the midst of the misery — travel forward with God!
In the midst of the stupidity — travel forward with God!
In the midst of the dishonesty — travel forward with God!

The key to Traveling Fit and Moving Forward in our lives of Faith is to travel forward with God — Precious Lord, Take our Hand and Lead us on!

Amen.

Amen.

Sources:

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<http://www.sermonwriter.com>

- Anne Lamott #grace Rebel Pilgrim

Scripture quotations from the World English Bible

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JLHIIIIFILES, Louisville, Kentucky, 2016.

Call To Prayer

Precious Lord, Eva vocalist

Pastoral Prayer

Living God, we are puzzled by the contours of your grace.

Can it be anything but foolishness that would create the earth and call it good?

Can it be anything but weakness that would offer up your own Son, your own self, to the powers of death?

Can it be anything but grace that would lift up the low and despised of this world?

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We yearn for tidiness. We demand order.

We count ourselves wise, and strong, and exalted, yet we do not understand you.

Do we need to understand? Or can we simply trust?

Help us to trust, O God.

Reduce us to nothing —

nothing that would stand in the way of your topsy-turvy movement in the world,

nothing that will settle for an explanation instead of a presence,

nothing but your willing disciples. Amen.

The Prayer of our Savior (sung)