

Journey of Faith

Matt 3:13 - 4:11

HTC

Our reading today might seem a little random, but I want to talk to you about our faith journeys and this passage is about the start of Jesus's journey of ministry and mission.

The Bible is full of stories about journeys, in fact I would go as far as to say that journeys make up a good proportion of the bible. Physical journeys and spiritual journeys, physical journeys that are also spiritual journeys and metaphorical or allegorical journeys. From Abram and Sarai obeying God's call to leave their home and travel to a new land, through the Israelites journeying down to Egypt and then fleeing Egypt for the promised land via the wilderness, through to the Apostles journeying all over the Mediterranean and further to spread the message of the Gospel, to tell the world about Jesus's sacrifice and God's forgiveness and love.

A journey is pointless unless it has a destination and a purpose. The purpose may be fulfilled as part of the journey or when arriving at the destination, but both are necessary.

Jesus's destination was always to return to being at God's right hand and the purpose of His journey was to provide the means for all people to be able to be reconciled with God and ultimately join Him in God's presence. He achieved this by taking the punishment for every sin on Himself on the Cross, taking the punishment and the death that we deserve, defeating sin and death itself by rising from the dead and thereby enabling us to come into God's awesome presence and to know His forgiveness and His love. His journey took Him from the confirmation of the Father's love and His mission at His baptism, into the desert where He experienced extreme deprivation and deep temptation. It took Him all around the area of Galilee and beyond. He loved and laughed and cried. He felt exasperation, frustration, anger, and exhaustion. There were times when His journey was easy and times when it was physically, mentally, and spiritually tough. He knows what our journey is like.

Our lives are a journey, and our faith is a journey. I don't know when your journey of faith started, I can trace mine back to my infancy when my Mother taught me to pray and sent me to Sunday School, although I didn't fully come to faith until I was 16. There have been times when like the Israelites I have wandered in the desert, sometimes for several years. There have been mountaintop highs and deep valleys of despond. And times when I have just faithfully carried on, putting one foot in front of the other. In the words of Anna in Frozen, just doing the next right thing. My destination is to be fully in God's presence. I am already a citizen of the Kingdom of God, I am already able to come into God's presence, but as St Paul put it, now we see in a glass darkly.

Journey of Faith

Matt 3:13 - 4:11

HTC

God's Kingdom on earth is being established and we are part of that work. So my purpose is the same as the purpose of every Christian – to follow Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to do the things that Jesus did and to live as Jesus lived. To be obedient to whatever we believe God is calling us to do. Every Christian has the same purpose and the same destination, but our journeys are unique. Each and every one of us will have times when we feel that God is very close to us and times when he feels so far away that we will cling to faith by the skin of our teeth. We will have times of fear and doubt and times of certainty, peace, and joy.

A journey without a destination has no purpose, whatever you might do on your journey, and people often do many good things. If you have no destination then you are in effect just wandering about in futility. Human beings were made to be in communion with God, to worship Him and enjoy His presence, that is the only destination that can bring about fulfilment of purpose.

I wonder where you feel you are on your journey of faith today. I really encourage you to think about it. I want to challenge you to think about your journey of faith, to think about the high points and the low points and to embrace them all, because they are all part of your journey towards God, even the times when you were going in the wrong direction. Your life, your journey is redeemed in Christ. If God feels far away right now, then try to have the courage to ask your brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for you. That is why He has given us to each other! If God feels close, then be thankful and pray for your brothers and sisters, for their journey. Wherever you are in your journey of faith, don't compare yourself to others; where they are on their journey is between them and God. That is not to say that we shouldn't be inspired by the faith of others, of course we should. And we should also encourage each other with testimonies of what the Lord has done for us. As the hymn goes, "it is no secret what God can do, what He's done for others, He can do for you". Wherever you are, be encouraged. If you have faith then you have a destination, the ultimate destination, and your life has purpose and meaning. You are a much-loved child of God.