

Exploring the Story in: Mark 9:30-41

The Invitation to be On the Way with Jesus

In the Gospel of Mark, the use of the expression “on the way,” or *he odos* in Greek, signifies not only the path the disciples walked with Jesus but the way to Jerusalem, the way of the cross, the path of discipleship. In today’s reading, Jesus and his disciples traveled together through Galilee and into Capernaum. When they arrive, Jesus asks them, “What were you arguing about *on the way*?” Jesus was well aware that the substance of their argument had to do with which of the disciples was the greatest. Our competitive society fosters this age-old question.

The ancient symbol of the labyrinth in medieval Christianity became a metaphor of the pilgrim, of being *on the way*. The labyrinths embedded in the floors of cathedrals throughout Europe were considered the final steps of the pilgrim’s journey, the Way to Jerusalem. The circuitous path to the sacred center of the labyrinth symbolizes the disciple’s movement into the deepest part of him or herself, to that place where God abides. The labyrinth reminds us that each of us has our own path, although like the disciples, we walk with traveling companions, the community of the faithful. As we embrace our own journey, the question of who is the greatest amongst us becomes inconsequential. Rather than asking, who is the greatest, as we look within ourselves and see our own possibilities, can we visualize that greatness within?

- *The Rev. Joyce Krajian*

Lectionary Readings

- Morning Ps. 119:73-80, 145
- Evening Ps. 121, 6
- Exod. 4:10-20 (21-26) 27-31
- 1 Cor. 14:1-19
- Mark 9:30-41

Prayer

Holy One, who travels *the way* with us, help us to stay faithful to the path you have called us to follow. Focused on you, may we no longer need to compare ourselves to others. Amen.

Lectionary Readings

- Morning Ps. 34, 146
- Evening Ps. 25, 91
- Exod. 5:1-6:1
- 1 Cor. 14:20-33a, 39-40
- Mark 9:42-50

Exploring the Story in: Mark 9:42-50

Rules of the Road

There is only one rule for walking the labyrinth: to walk at your own pace. Stop along the way if you would like, or dance, run, crawl, walk backwards. Walk between the lines or straddle them. When you pay attention to how you are walking, you can learn a great deal about how you are living. Honor what you are feeling as you walk the labyrinth; it is a path to accepting what is true and real about yourself. Let go of judgment as you walk. Listen to your body, your mind, and the longing of your spirit as you take one step at a time. This path is not straight; there are turns to negotiate—some of them bring questions. What am I carrying with me that I no longer need? What new possibility awaits me? These questions lead us into ourselves, and this is the power of the labyrinth as a symbol. It is capable of giving that which is inward, an outward form.

In this passage from Mark, Jesus encourages us to consider our path and asks us to be on the way with him. This path of discipleship is full of challenge. We may stumble and at times, cause others to stumble. Of course, it was not his intention that we take his commands in verses 44-47 literally. Eyes, hands and feet cannot, of and by themselves, do wrong. What Jesus speaks of begins in our mind. We are invited to participate in the Kingdom of God, to choose God in a moment-by moment way, to live as love in action.

In the words of Frederick Buechner, “If you want to know who you really are as distinct from who you like to think you are, keep an eye on where your feet take you.”

- *The Rev. Joyce Krajian*

Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument
of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me
sow love,
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

*From the prayer of St. Francis
of Assisi

Exploring the Story in: Psalm 27

The Desire of My Heart

One of the Psalms for this evening's lection is Psalm 27, a lament in which the psalmist sings of both the nearness of God's deliverance (verses 1-6) and the confidence that God will again come to the singer's aid (verses 7-14). The psalmist declares that God is "my light," "my salvation," and "my stronghold," so there is no need to "fear" or "be afraid."

In verse 4, we read the psalmist's confession of the desire of his heart: "to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." In the church, the synagogue, and the mosque, the faithful gather to listen for the voice of God. Within that sacred space, the desires, the intimacies, the longings of a community are collected. Seekers enter the house of the Lord with burdens of heart that could find healing nowhere else. It is to the house of the Lord that people come when they are most vulnerable, starving for meaning, in need of blessing, or with a heart that bursts with thanks for blessings and gifts received through no merit of their own. We enter the house of the Lord seeking the divine welcome that awaits us. How wonderful it would be to live in this space "all the days of my life."

When you step onto the labyrinth, you move toward the center. What awaits you there? Each time you walk the labyrinth, the experience is different. What matters, and what makes each labyrinth walk unique, is how open you are to receive God. When you walk the labyrinth, there is always the possibility of coming into God's house. If you are open to receive, what awaits you is an encounter with the divine.

- *The Rev. Joyce Krajian*

Lectionary Readings

- Morning Ps. 5, 147:1-11
- Evening Ps. 27, 51
- Exod. 7:8-24
- 2 Cor. 2:14-3:6
- Mark 10:1-16

Prayer

God, open us to see that wherever we find ourselves, you are already there. Each step of the way can become holy ground. Bless our path. Amen.

Lectionary Readings

- Morning Ps. 27, 147:12-20
- Evening Ps. 126, 102
- Exod. 7:25-8:19
- 2 Cor. 3:7-18
- Mark 10:17-31

Exploring the Story in: Mark 10:17-31

Traveling Lightly

On my 16th birthday and for every special occasion thereafter, my parents gave me a piece of American Tourister luggage until I had a complete set. Do you remember the hard blue vinyl luggage of the 70s? From the cosmetic case, to the extra large suitcase (which, when filled, I could barely lift), I was equipped to pack all I needed (and more). A perpetual problem with such a set of luggage is that the pieces had to be stored when not in use. They could not be squished under a bed, or put inside one another like Russian nesting dolls. They became obsolete, as I began to travel more lightly. I preferred a backpack, which left my hands free to engage in the world around me.

Perhaps the man with “many possessions” who came to Jesus was unable to follow him simply because he was unwilling to open his hands. His feet were mired, less because of his wealth and possessions but more because of the attitude having much can foster: the illusion of self-sufficiency, the feeling that one does not need anyone else – including God. His self-sufficiency obscured the possibility of engaging in community, precluded mutuality and the promise that when we let go of what we have for the sake of Jesus, we will receive a hundredfold in this age and the age to come. In the end, he “went away grieving.”

Take time this week to walk the labyrinth. Whether rich or poor, the labyrinth is a place for everyone. Listen to the call of Jesus to follow him on the way to Jerusalem, symbolized by the sacred center of the labyrinth. Step into the labyrinth. When you do, I encourage you to travel lightly, to leave your expectations behind. Bring your intention to be open, so you are free to receive all that God offers.

- *The Rev. Joyce Krajian*

Prayer

Loving God, may all that is unforgiven in me be released. May my fears yield their deepest tranquilities. May all that is un-lived in me blossom into a future graced with love.

*From John O'Donohue

Exploring the Story in: Mark 10:32-45



Valerie Craig, *Duet* 2011 Oil

Lectionary Readings

- Morning Ps. 22, 148
- Evening Ps. 105, 130
- Exod. 9:13-35
- 2 Cor. 4:1-12
- Mark 10:32-45

Prayer

Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**From The Book of Common Prayer*

Lectionary Readings

- Morning Ps. 43, 149
- Evening Ps. 31, 143
- Exod. 10:21-11:8
- 2 Cor. 4:13-18
- Mark 10:46-52

Exploring the Story in: Mark 10:46-52

Your Faith Has Made You Well

Cormac McCarthy, in his novel *The Road*, presents us with a bleak, post apocalyptic world, in which a diligent father and timid son fight for their lives, by following a treacherous road toward a sea, and survivable milder winters. The father remains hopeful, and despite the soullessness of their world, teaches his son through his example about survival, good and evil, and love. The conversations between father and son are limited, yet full of love. The father wants to provide his son with all that he will need to carry life, or “the fire,” as they speak of it, forward. On the way, the father weakens and the son fears the unimaginable. When the father is dying, this is the tender conversation between them:

I want to be with you. *You can't.* Please. *You can't.* *You have to carry the fire.* I don't know how to. *Yes, you do.* Is it real? The fire? *Yes, it is.* Where is it? I don't know where it is. *Yes, you do. It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it...* You said you wouldn't ever leave me. *I know. I'm sorry. You have my whole heart. You always did. You're the best guy. You always were. If I'm not here you can still talk to me. You can talk to me and I'll talk to you. You'll see. Will I hear you? Yes. You will. You have to make it like talk that you imagine. And you'll hear me. You have to practice. Just don't give up. Okay? Okay. Okay.* (p. 278-9)

As Jesus heads toward Jerusalem, he wants those who believe to follow him there. Just as the father instills faith in his son, manifest in “the fire,” that provides him purpose; Jesus heals the faithful Bartimaeus who then follows the light of Christ. Bartimaeus and the son in *The Road*, are made whole because of their trust in their experience of love. With healing, comes the responsibility and the capacity to carry love forward, to follow Jesus *on the way*.

- *The Rev. Joyce Krajian*

Prayer

O God, who calls us to walk on the way, may my faith in you complete me, and make me whole. Let me seek you in my desire. Let me desire you in my seeking. Let me find you by loving you. Let me love you when I find you. Amen.

*From St. Anselm