

Sunday March 1, 2020

First Sunday of Lent

Rev. Heather L. Stierheim

Journey to Hope: "Are We Ready Yet?"

Mark 10:13-16 (The Message) *The people brought children to Jesus, hoping he might touch them. The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus was irate and let them know it: "Don't push these children away. Don't ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom. Mark this: Unless you accept God's kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you'll never get in." Then, gathering the children up in his arms, he laid his hands of blessing on them.*

Are we Ready Yet? Perhaps you have said that or thought it prior to a trip. Think about the trips you've taken over your lifetime. How did you prepare for travel? Who was with you for the ride? Have you traveled with someone who tried to keep you from getting to where you know you belong?

Did you stop before you reached your goal?

We began Lent this week with Ash Wednesday. On Wed, we acknowledged and marked ourselves as sinners who are in need of forgiveness. But even in that solemn moment, we were reminded that this journey toward Easter comes with expectation and HOPE for the joy of the Easter message.

On this spiritual journey- we need encouragement. We need to help each other and hold each other accountable- we can't do this alone.

Mark's passage about Jesus and the little children is often referred to on special days that acknowledge the importance of children in God's kingdom. However, we all are God's children, and adults and children alike should consider our relationship with Christ. He would never want anyone or anything to get in the way of our interaction with him.

- Have people in your prevented a deeper relationship with Christ? If so, how do we find strength to move past them? How do we align ourselves with others who will not block us and will encourage us to reach the goal?

- Sometimes married couples get in the way of one another's relationship with Christ. Parents can get in the way if they are skeptical of the church and religion. Friends who don't go to church can encourage us to use our time differently, ultimately getting in the way of the most important friendship of all – with Christ. Perhaps colleagues would rather see us work all the time rather than taking time for devotion and worship. The list could go on.

Peer pressure is all around us- those who push us away from good and healthy relationships, blocking the road to hope. But there are others with whom we travel on life's journey can make good times better and hard times less difficult. We travel our spiritual journey with fellow travelers and with Christ himself.

As we do this, let's think about a hike, a train trip, or camping....we'd take a backpack. We need to carry things in our backpack that will aid us- bandaids and ointments for the injuries we get along the way. Perhaps scar remover? Wouldn't it be nice to remove our emotional scars so easily?

What might we need to remove from our travel pack? Worry from the past; a leash- recognizing that others may lead us if we don't turn to Christ.

During Lent, as we travel together, make new friends- be on the lookout for people at church, work, or school who may be able to assist you on the way. "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2, NRSV)

Let us walk this journey of hope toward Easter together! AMEN.

References:

Harper Collins Study Bible NRSV and CEB Bibles and United Methodist Discipleship Ministries

Announcements:

JOYS

Travel for so many- ask for traveling mercies

Outbreak of coronavirus

CONCERNS

GRIEF

Shirley Giesler- Patti, Kerrie, and Lysa SERVICE SAT MARCH 28 at 11am w
luncheon to follow

COMMUNITY

Soup Stroll

WORLD