

SERMON: God Keeps His Promises: To Guide Us

Rev. Geoff Ross Sunday, January 17, 2021

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

[1987-25yrs/old-decided to travel around the world!No idea how.Looked at maps/Bought a 'round-the-world'/one-way ticket:flew into the west and returned out of the east. I travelled alone!Goal:Christmas in Khartoum/land of Live Aid!Famine/drought.At 1st:OK-adventure – weather started getting rough:"Calamity-World-Tour:coup d'état/hurricane – floods/fire/slipped disc...Food Poisoning!Lost/Alone/Feverish in hostel/Katmandu-48hrs-didn't recognize myself/prayed 'not to die'/Went outside/don't know how/found house/let me in-Lost/Found-dead/alive.]

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)X2 – the Bible tells us to "trust in the Lord" – trust that He "will make straight" our paths. Do you/we? Do we trust in the Lord? With all our heart? Or, do we as the proverb says; "rely on our own insight" over God in/through Jesus to guide us? Do we? Or as "we like sheep" have we "gone astray; have we all turned to our own way"? Is this us? Does it feel like we've gone astray? They call it being lost for a reason! Do you feel disoriented/adrift/bewildered/confused/vulnerable/aimless/helpless – a sheep, lost/alone/far from home? Maybe it's because you/me/we've lost sight of our shepherd who leads us "beside the still waters/in the paths of righteousness":maybe it's because we need our guide – the one God promised would guide us into His/God's presence, forever.

[The plan-such as it was-was to literally 'be-with' us:Gospels full of stories of Jesus/disciples spending time/together!Numerous references to being "on the way"/walked from place to place:walked/talked/ate/slept/laughed/quarreled – learned. Shared-Common-Experience:Present was Presence! All started with the simple invitation: "Follow Me!"Storm on the Sea:Afraid/didn't want to die/forgot Jesus was 'with them':calmed Sea/saved them – asked why they had "so little faith?"/Asks us the same...]
Life, when you think about it, is an uncharted journey. There are days when things go smooth/steady/safely – a Class 1/2 Day(Whitewater:Relaxing/might get splashed); but as we get older/journey through life, those days seem few/far between: most days – especially these days – seem filled with one crisis after another – class 4/5/even 6!(Definitely getting soaked-9/10 fun!-to Niagara falls in a barrel!) Everyday, as we try to "steer" through life/obstacles, we're confronted with decisions/forks in the road/river/choices that have consequences. The saying "decisions we make make us" is true:for good/bad. Too bad/largely, life doesn't have a "How-to" manual/a roadmap/guide book! It doesn't take much to lose the path and end up on the road to ruin. Wouldn't it be nice if God could send giant 'road-signs' to warn us/someone to guide us?

[Isaiah/Prophet-prophecy:Yes/we're sheep gone astray/BUT God has a plan/promise:Will send a Saviour/shepherd/guide who will 'deliver' us/"the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" – the "sign" of the Luke/Isaiah reading/Child, born/given:Mighty God/Everlasting Father/Prince of Peace – Wonderful Counselor! "wonderful in counsel,

and excellent in wisdom” (Isaiah 28:29) God/Jesus:3 “Omni’s”-omnipresent/omnipotent/omniscient. “Omni”: “all”/“everything” – God is all-knowing-knows it all. Knows how to guide the stars/knows how to us out of our problems!]

The Bible tells us that not a single bird falls to the ground without God knowing it/knows the number of hairs on our head/exactly what is going on. It tells us that *“before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes”* (Heb 4:13)/that all things are visible/known to this all-knowing God is also the God who *“searches [us], and know [our] heart/tests [us]/knows [our] thoughts – but will also “lead me/you/us in the way everlasting.”* (Ps 139:23-24) This is Good News to all of us who feel unworthy/have doubted/questioned/railed against our ‘lot’ (even though we packed our own lunch!) the ‘Shepherd’/Guide promised in Psalm 23 – and Isaiah – came/He *“passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,”* [to be one-of us] *“who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.”* And this happened because God keeps His promises.

[Question/doubt: ‘What will I be/do with my life? Psychiatrist/English Prof/Social worker/Minister? Dreams: Hallway of doors/name-plates/running-stopped “Ministry” ... Threshold: no more hallway/doors! No plan B... Trust/faith- ‘Follow’/walk-with/the be-with God. No doubts.]

In sending Jesus – the long-promised Messiah – God sent His guide to us in a way it never had been before. Our Philippians reading/depicts Jesus as the promised One/who came to be-with us/to reveal to us the fulfillment of God’s be-with promise/to proclaim God’s plan/promise for our salvation/to show us His presence. Friends, Jesus is literally *“The Way”* – the path – by which we can return into right relationship with God. Jesus didn’t say I will show you the way/said I AM the Way! – I am the path/follow me.... I will go to prepare a place for you/I will come again/take you to with me/where I am, you will be also/you know the way to the place where I am going. *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.”* (John 14:6;1-4) In/through Jesus God fulfilled His promise to be-with us/as Jesus God came to be-with us to tell/show/guide us toward the path of righteousness/place prepared for us/God’s presence – found/saved/Holy/redeemed/restored – at peace. Thanks be to God – the God kept His promise – to be-with us/to guide us. Amen.