

"How do we get there from here"?

Exodus 13:17-22

New Testament Reading: Mark 10: 17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother." ' He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Sermon Text: Exodus 13:17 & 18 - 20 - 22 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer; for God thought, 'If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt.' So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness towards the Red Sea. ....So Israelites set out from Succoth, and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

**This is the word of the Lord, thanks be to God**

Let us pray: Father, I stand behind this sacred desk on sacred ground. May the meditations of my heart and the words from my mouth be acceptable to You and edifying to us who hear, O Lord and our Redeemer Amen

Several years ago, about a year before Carolyn and I were married.....Maybe I should have said, "A real long time ago...." when Carolyn was a second year student at

Wheaton College outside of Chicago. During that year she was part of a 4 person evangelistic team, of which there were several on campus. They would be invited by churches in the greater Wheaton area to be in charge of the Sunday evening service. The team would provide the sermon and special music. Carolyn was the team accompanist.

That same year I was in the USAF stationed in Goose Bay, Labrador. This was not one of those sought after assignments. After serving one year, in April 1957 it was time to rotate back to the states and to my new assignment, Charleston AFB, SC. On the way to my next assignment I stopped at home for some leave .

While on leave, in Cleveland, Ohio, I drove to Wheaton College to surprise Carolyn and spend the weekend. On Sunday Carolyn's team had a Sunday night assignment at a church about 45 minutes from school. With permission from the dorm mother Carolyn was allowed to ride with me and I promised to have her back by 11pm. We arrived at the church on time and the team led the service. After the service we headed back to Wheaton. I have always had a pretty good sense of direction and the trip back was uneventful. I saw the same bridges, gas stations and other land marks that I had noticed on the way up so all was well,--I thought. After some time I thought we should be getting pretty close to school. mmmm no school yet, so I stopped to make sure I was going the right way and was told I was going in the opposite direction with no hope of getting back to Wheaton before 11:00pm. To this day I do not think the dorm mother believed my story. When I saw her the next day I got that "sure Dave" smile. You would not have believed me either right :-). Leaving the church I honestly thought I was going the right way, but I was wrong.

In August 2007, Carolyn and I drove to Larchwood, Iowa to attend a 95th Anniversary of the Grandview Covenant Church. I served this church a little over two years as a student pastor while in seminary. Before the trip I decided that it was time to purchase

a GPS. Wow, what a wonderful gadget. While going thru Memphis, following the GPS, something did not seem right. It seemed like the GPS was taking us in the opposite direction especially when Ms. GPS said ‘exit ramp right (north). I was getting closer to the exit and Ms. GPS repeated, exit ramp on right, exit ramp on right. It did not feel right so I did not exit ramp on right. Passing the ramp I immediately realized Ms. GPS was right then she said, ‘make a U turn ASAP. Under her breath she was probably saying, Dave , ‘What is it that you don’t understand about , ‘exit ramp on right.’

Both of these stories are similar to what we experience on our faith journey. (1) Many times we think we are going in the right direction. Not necessarily the end of the world, just that there is a better way toward a better end. (2) I thought I knew more and was smarter than Ms. GPS and would do it my way. Again not necessarily the end of the world, but it reminds me I don’t know everything.

Think with me for a few minutes of your faith journey, like the Israelites leaving Egypt and heading to the land of milk and honey, the Promised Land.

TS This Exodus story tells us something very special about God that is important to know as we trail our faith journey to the promised land.

FIRST IT TELLS US THAT GOD KNOWS WHERE WE ARE (Exodus 3:7) “Then the Lord said, ‘I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, ...

After Joseph died and with new Kings, during their 430 years in Egypt, the Egyptian government saw the Israelites as a threat. As we read:, *Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, ‘Look, the Israelite people are*

*more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.* ‘For Israel living in Egypt it was not the good life.

At times our faith journey is not the good life. And now we have come to this worship time to sit with our family, friends and to be with God and hear what God has to say. The sermon text reminds us that God knew of Israel's sufferings. For us it means God knows what is going on with us. What does he know? So listen as he whispers to us,, do you hear him,

“I know what is going on in your life that nobody else knows. I can see your joy and hurt. I know of your sickness and what the doctors will tell you this week about those test results. I know of the new baby in your family, your loss of employment and what happened to your stock portfolio last week. I also know of your loneliness that comes from the loss of a spouse, friend, a pet or even a home. A senior adult told me once, “I am so busy and tired from going to funerals of friends and doctors appointments that I have little time for anything else.” Yes, and God knows and all about your dirty laundry.

Jesus says to us, “I feel your pain because I have been there,” I know what it means to be alone, remember the cross. Remember how I *cried out, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, have you like Peter and others forsaken me?* That is right. I had the feeling that even my own Father had forsaken me.

“The Lord said, ‘I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings and to us he says the same, I know.

SECOND This story tells us that GOD KNOWS HOW TO GET US FROM HERE TO THERE.

(ILL) One of my military assignments took our family to Minot AFB, ND. That certainly is not the most sought after assignments. It is a very flat country and not much out there. However, it was a place that I would fulfill my dream of learning to fly. I fulfilled the requirements and passed the test to get my private and commercial pilot's license. One of my trips was to fly our family to Cleveland, Ohio to attend a family reunion. On the way back the night sky was clear and beautiful and just before landing back at Minot I ran into unexpected low cloud cover. In pilot's language, I was in the soup. I knew there were very high radio towers just outside of town near my flight path and they are unforgiving if you hit one. I radioed Minot AFB tower and told him of my plight and air traffic controller's responded, "I see you on my radar screen, turn right to heading.xxx now turn to heading xxx now you should see the end of the runway and like the parting of the red sea there was the end of the runway.

It had been a long trip and knowing my dilemma, to hear the words, I know where you are, I can see you on my radar screen, music to my ears and lowered my anxiety lever. That controller knew where all the hazards were and how to go around them and land safely.

They (Israel) set out....and the Lord went in front of them with a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so they could travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

That was the world's first GPS and air traffic controller. God was going to make sure Israel would ultimately get to, 'the promise land filled with milk and honey'. He even told them, at times, I will give you a different heading and you may think you are going the wrong way, but trust me. That means for us frequency/GPS will keep us away from

those troubled areas and pot holes. It may seem like the wrong way and may be longer, but it will be the safest.

Where is “there” for you, the place we all want to get to after this life, the land of milk and honey for which Christ died for you? For some ‘there’ is heaven? Is that why Christ died? Yes, that is important but I do not believe that was the sole purpose of the Easter event. Jesus said, I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.” That is what the good news of the Gospel is about --how to live each day. God’s GPS will do just that, lead us around and through the mine fields, around the hazards. Along the way he will keep us refreshed (takes us to green pastures) He quenches our thirst (beside still waters); refills our tank (he restores my soul). He leads me in right paths (exit ramp on right), He takes me thru the mine fields (thru the valley of death), removes fear (I fear no evil) I do not travel this life alone (for I am with you); He provides us with the good life (anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.) there is no expiration date (all the days of my life,) then comes the promise land (dwell in the house of the Lord forever). That is how He gets us ‘there’.

Where is “here” for you today? Is ‘here’ being under the knife of a surgeon this week? Is it today: frustration, anger, hate, uncertainty, financial short fall. I have the privilege of working with our senior community of which “I is a member”. The aging process is really not very user friendly. You can’t stop it. Or, your “here” today may be getting ready to leave home for college or entering some another phase of your life. Here are some of God’s frequencies for getting to “There”.

(ILL) My first cross country flight during private pilot training was to fly from Minot to Bottineau, ND, a distance as the crow flies 40 miles. Flight plan strapped to my knee, clearance to take off received and it was a clear day, ‘you could see forever.’ Shortly into the flight I noticed that there was lake on the right of the

airplane and on my flight plan had it was on the left. I made a slight manual correction and proceed on to my destination. With the fuel gage moving down and other things not looking right I remembered the last words from my instructor, “If you get in trouble, tune in the Minot Airport radio frequency, keep the needle straight and it will bring you right back home.... and it worked.

God provides the frequency for the best way to enjoy your trip and the abundant life on the way to the promise land. How do we get ‘there’ with what we have in our hands? Look what is in the palm of your hand?

Your spouse and God says:

*Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. ...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*

A new born child and God says:

*And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (includes church and Sunday School )*

Kids heading for college and God says:

*...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. **and** ‘Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

About your assets God says:

*As for those who in the present age are rich, ...They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share.*

Our fellow neighbors and coworkers and God says:

*“Love God and your neighbor as yourself.”*

Generally speaking: To all other desired destinations and responsibilities we have, God says

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,*

God's GPS will lead us to all those places where life in abundance can be found. In given circumstances these are the "exit ramp on right". Sometime we did not agreed and we know a better way. God then says, "Dave, what is it about what I have told you that you don't understand? This is not rocket science. Then we hear God say, I forgive but you need to make a U-Turn ASAP and get back on the right track or you will never really get there from here."

(ILL) Back is the early 70's when our oldest was around 6. One evening after supper and just before bed time we had a heavy thunderstorm with lots of lightning and the lights went out. It was time for bed so with flash light in hand we took the children upstairs, tucked them in and started back down stairs. Then thru the darkness I heard, "Daddy, stay here". I could not make the storm go away, but he wanted me to stay close by. God says to us, I know where you are and I will stay with you thru this.

Today the rest of your life is in the palm of our hands. I would venture to say, for all of us, there are areas we need to 'exit ramp on right' or make a U-turn NOW. We still have time and it is your choice, God stands ready with a pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night and he will be in front of us.

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