

MAY 222011

SCRIPTURE:

NEW TESTAMENT: Acts 7: 55-60
EPISTLE: 1 Peter 2: 2-10
GOSPEL: John 14: 1-14

MEDITATION

GPS or Another Way?

Lately we have been hearing a lot about GPS direction. Many of our vehicles now have these instruments mounted on our dashboards or part of our vehicles computer system. All you have to do is enter your destination and the GPS will guide you, telling you exactly where to turn, how long to travel in a certain direction, and alert you when you are at your destination. I don't have one of these "miracle things" in my car but my brother does. I remember last spring going with him to the synagogue and despite the fact that I could easily tell him how to get there he insisted on plugging in our destination in his GPS. I remained patient while it took him several minutes to program the GPS but I couldn't help but think how "silly" this was. He could have looked at a map in a much shorter time OR he could have listened to ME and we would have been there with much less time and greater ease.

It seems in our modern world that we put our trust in technology with absolute abandon. The news these last few months has shown us that this is not always wise. Blindly following a "machine" lead to a young woman in New Brunswick being lost in the snow for several days. And we all have anguished with the family of the couple who followed their GPS and became lost in the wilderness of Nevada. Happily the woman in that incident was found after 7 weeks of surviving in her car, although sadly her husband is still missing. I could not help but think about what sustained that woman as she spent those endless days, alone, hungry and frightened about what would happen to her and her husband. Did she pray? Did she depend on the presence of the Holy Spirit to strengthen her in her terror? I imagine she did. What else can we do when the NEW world of technology fails us! Blindly following "something" does not seem to be the answer for humans.

How can we know the way? Who is it we should depend on to guide us when we seem to be lost? Over the last few months and years the world in which we live seems to be lost. In this modern time, we have found ourselves with no outline, no road map, no blueprint before us; we have found ourselves propelled onto the landscape of economic meltdown, global warfare, and political standoffs. We seem to be lost. Most of us have not traveled this way before and feel as if we are being swept along in directions, without clear courses. We find ourselves on new roads; discover we are in unfamiliar territory, arriving at destinations not of our own choosing. As we seek to make sense of the landscape we wonder which path to take. Which direction is correct? Who should be listen to? Who should we follow? It is all to clear that blindly following the rich and powerful seems to fail time and time again. We see this in the Middle East and Africa as ordinary citizens

are willing to organize and stand against their leaders who have abused and oppressed them for decades. If you are like me you have watched the tragic circumstances unfolding around the head of the IMF as we have seen a powerful and supposedly brilliant man bring his organization and his own personal life into absolute destruction by unseeingly irrational behaviour. Do you ask yourself how all of this can be happening? How can humans get so far off the road and so lost? Is it greed? Is it a sense of entitlement that sees powerful people believing that they can do ANYTHING they like without any consequences? What ever the reasons it appears clear to me that we need to be part of a new direction. We need to follow a different “mind set” that will see human beings on a much more solid and less traumatic way of life.

The disciples encountering Jesus after the resurrection were clearly a sad and frightened lot. Terrified even, because they had not understood all that Jesus had taught them when he was leading them, and now they are confronted with what would appear to be UNBELIEVABLE. A risen and present Christ. Impossibility in their time and ours! Who today could easily accept the presence of Christ in our midst? We are mostly scoffing at this “misguided” evangelist from the states who tried to convince the world that the end was at hand. Once again listening to and following blindly a human being has brought many people’s lives into chaos. So then if following humans blindly is NOT the answer what is?

Back to my brother and his dependence on his GPS. What if he had heeded my advice and used a MAP if he was not willing to listen to me. Maps can not be followed blindly either because there is the potential of human error in their production but they do offer us some unique possibilities. Maps show us the relationships things have to each other. Distances and landmarks, choices of routes and other possible destinations, all become clear on a road map. Maps locate us in the large scheme of things; they remind us that we are not isolated, and that the distance and geography between us has tangible effects on the choices we make. But what maps don’t tell us is which route to take; we get to make that decision ourselves. And it is that choice that seemed to trouble the disciples as Jesus prepares to leave them.

How can we know the way? In uncertain times – like those of the disciples and we ourselves – many look for direction and guidance on the way. Jesus declares himself the “way and the truth, and the life” opening up new possibilities for relationship and communion with him. He speaks about knowing him by his words and works, thus revealing not only himself but the very heart of God. Jesus does not declare us “lost” but instead invites us to the way as a path of action and witness, discovered as we look at him, and as we look LIKE HIM. It is not an invitation to blind GPS direction but rather an invitation to us to struggle with his teachings, to look inward and then look outward to see how it is WE can make the right decisions in our lives, in the here and now.

If we look to Jesus’ life we see that it was all about relationships. It wasn’t rules that guided him blindly, although he did put trust in the laws and rules of his time. When he mistrusted those laws was when he saw them being twisted and misused by humans for their own personal benefit. When Jesus fed the hungry, healed the sick, spoke of

outsiders, Jesus revealed not only his own loving, justice driven nature but that of God's. He says to the disciples, If you want to know what God looks like, look at my relationships with others, then you'll see God. Our own actions reveal the relationships we have with the world in a way that can point others to God.

I guess the ultimate question for each of us has to be "How am I doing?" Is the way I live and example of how Jesus would have me live or am I LOST in my own human needs and desires? Trusting blindly in the ways of humans is just too dangerous of a path way. We need something and someone who is larger than a human. For Christians that is Jesus. Often Jesus' teachings are sometimes bewildering for us. When he said, "Know one comes to the Father except through me." I am challenged to work hard within relationship to come to understand this statement. In our world believing that on human, or one pathway, or one religion has a monopoly on the truth has often led to hatred and very bad outcomes. So what is the answer? I believe it is the struggle. The effort and the struggle to understand the whole story of Jesus' life and not just pulled out words. What did Jesus LIVE. That's were the road map is. When we gather for worship, stand for justice, weep with the oppressed, and welcome the stranger, then we are examples of the life that Jesus led. A life that leads to love, that leads to God. It is not easy. The answers do not come without study and striving and searching our own lives and pathways. Often I think we have a human deficiency in that somehow we believe that we can FOOL each other and even FOOL God. That is human deficiency. We can not FOOL God. How we live and what we speak and what we show with our lives are all part of the way. It is an ongoing life long journey. We are not there, that is certainly clear. BUT, I think if we keep helping each other along the way, if we are committed to our faith and keep seeking for the truth, without hate, without malice, with only LOVE AND JESUS' TEACHINGS TO GUIDE US, THEN WE HAVE FOUND THE RIGHT PATH FOR THE WAY GOD WOULD HAVE THE WORLD BE.

MAY IT BE SO! .