

*A Joyful Path...Journeying Beyond
Jerusalem:*

"Up, Up, and...Stay!"

Psalm 16:11a; John 15:11; Acts 1:3-14
June 2, 2019 Eastertide Ascension Sunday

"Come Back! Come Back!"

Almost every American knows the scene...Dorothy thinking she's going back to Kansas at last...

thinking the wizard will take her with him...make magic for her and solve her problems.

She's thinking she will be returned without any further effort to the way it used to be...but better...having helped her friends get brains, courage, a heart.

But instead, the *wizard* ascends into the clouds and Dorothy is left right where she is...feels abandoned...only to find...she always had the power to go home...it was within her all the time

...the power of her truest desires alongside all the wisdom of all her new experiences.

But it is true though...she really did get jerked around,
Nailed, for a while, didn't she?

But she got wise about wizards & witches (tricksters in life):
those who don't have any more power than she has

but talk a good talk and put on a good show!

And she fell for it...have you?

And she got wiser about tricksters and confronted them...

wise about how people can truly care for each other and help each other and sacrifice for each other.

How much power we have together!

Indeed, unless we are all help each other,

no one may get where they want to go!

Here's the thing:

I wonder if the disciples felt similarly bereft as they saw the wrinkled soles of Jesus' feet fade into the clouds?

I picture them standing there, squinting until their eyes water and their necks grow stiff, as they watch their window to God disappear...*oh no, oh no, you can't leave me here like this!*

And actually, God doesn't!

They too had the power all the time...something they too had to realize on their own.

The window to God did not disappear...it's been there the whole time...it's within...open, within.

And the angels, just like the good fairy/good witch, point to this reality.

Jesus told them it would be so...they would be filled with the power and protected as they became one with each other and one with God.

In fact, He says eternal life is knowing God and becoming one with God starting here and now. Tap those heals together!

And...the angels reveal the way...home...the joyful path.

BUT...it leads them back to Jerusalem...the very city where their troubles abound...go there! The place of confrontation.

It is in the very center of our real lives where power is needed!

And they and we must step out on our own now...click our heels and take those first steps.

Stay the path and head back to Jerusalem.

This is how a child grows into an adult or an adult into true maturity, which has nothing to do with age but self-awareness.

At some point, knowing what you now know...

(BTW, forgive yourself for what you didn't know before you knew it!)

...at some point...knowing what you now know,

you have to live life out there on your own.

The rubber hits the road.

The choices have to made, not just talked about.

...As a child, you go down to the baseball field with your buddies with no adults around to supervise you.

...You go out with your friends on Friday night as a teenager.

...You have to walk through a water cooler meeting of a clique at work at work.

...You hear something hard to believe at church.

...Your life partner belittles your choices or someone else's without regard.

At some point, each of us has to make "the faith" our own.

Faith is not a set of ideas but a way of living.

And, no one can live your life for you.

Who better than Jesus knows how hard this is to do

and yet, true life begins only as you do...

and you know the truth of this!

So...no, Jesus didn't leave because He didn't care.

He left because He does care. Because it's up to you.

Your life is up to you.

And your choices make a difference in the grand scheme of things.

He leaves giving a promise of power.
Not the power of this world, but of the cosmos!

So, *can you imagine the scene?*

As the disciples are directed by the messengers to return to Jerusalem. ...*I can hear them now...*

“Darn! Anywhere but there, where we are most likely to be betrayed, where the work is hardest to do, and the wicked prevail? No way! I don’t want to confront that!”

Yes way!

That’s exactly where you *have* to go in order for anything to be different. Move toward the hardest place, the tension, live facing forward...confronting your own Jerusalem.

With the exception of abusive situations,
the only place we can go to make life different
is the place where it most needs to be different.

You can practice, sift and sort, get clearer,
get nourished...

but eventually you have to walk the talk...
you have to go back to Jerusalem.

You moved through Bethlehem and Jerusalem, came down off that cross, and now having had 40 days of questions and doubts, Jesus still coaching you,
you have to go back and confront the life that nailed you!

And where exactly in Jerusalem did they go?

The upper room...the same upper room in which they ate with Jesus his last supper, our first communion.

...A safe place with safe friends from which they can think...and move out into the rest of their lives. Hint! Hint!

The upper room...let me share wisdom from our Wednesday Wisdom Circle about living in that upper room as the first step back in Jerusalem:

We all need an upper room where we can take time to just breathe and process/think, trusting in the space to give us a safe place to reflect upon how we got nailed and how we survived it...reflect upon how life nailed you for daring to be a new you and you're still here...

space and time to heal enough to have some confidence to confront that which needs confronting.

Do you have an upper room safe place to reflect on your Christmas wisdom that you walked to Jerusalem and for which you got nailed?

A space to regroup... perhaps it's a place but perhaps it's a person?

And what would the conversation be...the one you would have with yourself in that upper room?

I wonder what those there in our Wisdom Teaching were talking about.

Had they wrestled enough with their doubts those 40 days, did they let themselves believe in all of the appearances of Jesus...coached into a new way of thinking:

were they able to let go of the "King will solve our problems/the wizard/the good witch will tell us what to do and all will be well..."

able to trust in themselves enough to now walk the talk and live a new life of integrity and justice?

Seems that is what happened as next week is Pentecost!

So what about your Upper Room?

We each need that upper room moment to be able to receive our Pentecost and a new walk of a life... to stay the journey and have it indeed be joyful!

You see, when Dorothy returned to Kansas...it was still Kansas.

And those who gathered around her bed as she opened her eyes had not changed. She Changed!

She'd have only a few Upper Room moments to decide to deny that whole thing...OR
find a way to make meaning of her experience
and be a new Dorothy!

But a few Upper Room moments can be enough!

And so she grouped, they regrouped. Have you?

Are you now able to resist the mind trap:

But I've always done it this way? I'll just try harder.

I don't have to change, they do! It's not my fault! It's out of my power to affect it.

If there is a God, then God will do it...for me! If you want me to believe, God, You do it!

It is so easy to claim as God's work what may simply be ours
to do, up against cultural norms, our usual ways,
faulty judgments and assumptions!

**Often we align what seems to be in our best interest
with what we want
to be in God's best interest.
We refuse to go...back to Kansas!**

It's Ascension Sunday.

And thank God, literally, it is not the end of the story or the end of the help.

Yes, ordinary time is coming where the rubber hits the road in life,

but first we receive a powerful gift that
will enable us be grounded...

so we can stand tall against wicked ways,
the usual ways of the world. Pentecost is coming.

Jesus did not leave us alone to do the worshipful work of living our lives.

He gathers us and births us as the church with the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Come to Pentecost next Sunday and bring lots of spirit flowers with you next week to
give out in the neighborhood and plant in the prayer gardens

symbolizing we here at Tippe are rooted in the faith...
and are on fire for justice with compassion!

Be with us strong to stand against usual ways,
able to do all things together.

As hard as the choices may be in life,

as scared or as angry as we may have reason to be,

we are not frozen, unable to move forward.

We are chosen...made able to live in Jerusalem...

everything is looking up!
Up, Up, And Stay!