

With the words from today's gospel, 'He set his face to go to Jerusalem', the road ahead is clear to Jesus and can have only one conclusion – death at the hands of the waiting authorities. Like Israel in the wilderness journey and like Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, there are times in our personal journey that we know we have only one direction to take, if we are to follow the way of God in our lives. The church calls to each of us this anniversary Sunday, 'come with us', and we respond by making a life changing choice.

Luke 9:51-60 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Israel is finally ready for the road. They've been stuck at Sinai and weren't prepared for the journey ahead. But every time of waiting gives way to the travel time, the first step toward the desired destination. What would first seem a short journey across the desert becomes the forty year wandering in the wilderness. Even when wandering, the people had the presence of God in the cloud that led them by day and the pillar of fire by night.

28 This was the order of march of the Israelites, company by company, when they set out. **29** Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, "I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for the Lord has promised good to Israel." **30** But he said to him, "I will not go, but I will go back to my own land and to my kindred." **31** He said, "Do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. **32** Moreover, if you go with us, whatever good the Lord does for us, the same we will do for you." **33** So they set out from the mount of the Lord three days' journey with the ark of the covenant of the Lord going before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them, **34** the cloud of the Lord being over them by day when they set out from the camp. **35** Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, "Arise, O Lord, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you." **36** And whenever it came to rest, he would say, "Return, O Lord of the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

COME with us and SHARE THE JOURNEY

I really should have thought twice before I blurted out in our Worship and Congregational Life Committee, "Wouldn't it be great to use the original service for anniversary Sunday!"

OK, I've been here before and know that times have changed and orders of service have changed and hymns have changed and prayers have changed and King James is no longer King and.. but I made a presumption that the focus for such an auspicious occasion would be just as appropriate for us 86 years later. After all, the church was just going through the disruption of 1925 and every church for nearly 60 kilometres had gone into the union and so the remnant had rallied and within an amazingly short time gathered together under the blue banner of the Grafton Street Church and... before the official proclamation of the new United Church of Canada in June 1925... there was a continuing Presbyterian Presence in the old Methodist Church with the first service on April 5, 1925. They imported a preacher from Knox-Crescent Presbyterian Church in Montreal to give the message for that historic moment... The Rev. R.W. Dickie, DD was the guest preacher and on that august occasion he proclaimed the word from Numbers 10:29. Yes, you heard right, Numbers 10:29. Now that's not really up there with Deuteronomy 6, the Shema, or Isaiah 58:12 'Rebuild the waste places' or Micah 6:8 'What does the Lord require', or John 3:16 'God so loved', or 1 Corinthians 13 or... or any of those passages that one might have presumed suitable for the occasion. No, he chose Numbers 10:29. And it was then that I realized I shouldn't have been so rash as to suggest our service today focus on that particular part of scripture.

Listen:

Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, "I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for the Lord has promised good to Israel."

That really doesn't just flow off the tongue now, does it?

But the more you digest this word, the more it grows on you. I wish I had the guidance of the Rev. Dickie's notes on the passage but I don't so I'll make due with what this passage may say 86 years later to the descendants of those noble Christians who gathered under the Blue Banner of the Continuing Presbyterian Church.

Come with us!

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Pray join with me as we explore this word that God has for us this anniversary Sunday.

We need explore the text in context. Join us as we journey with 15th century B. C. Hebrew in their adventures – and misadventures – in the wilderness as they march to the Promised Land. Similar to an epic, Numbers tells the story of Israel's journey from Mount Sinai to the borders of the Promised Land, summarizing the first 40 years of the nation's historical beginnings.

Israel has been liberated from slavery at the hands of God's servant Moses. They made their way to Sinai where they were able to celebrate the Passover for the very first time - a reminder that the divine hand was the means of their liberation from slavery. Everyone is on a high because all that is left is a brief journey of a few weeks or maybe even months for such a large group but the promised land will soon be in sight and the covenant consummated after nearly 400 years in slavery.

Take a look at this brief one sided conversation. It is between Moses and Hobab – you might know him better as Jethro – who is Moses' father-in-law.

Now we need to focus in on our particular passage which is an invitation to join the journey: "Come with us!" Don't we all like getting an invitation... OK maybe not an invitation to where we really don't want to go, which is how Hobab interprets this invitation, but we do like to get an invitation when we think it is to somewhere special.

Come with us – on an amazing adventure.

Come with us – as we do a new thing.

Come with us - it's time for nation building, to reclaim a promised land, to reclaim a covenant made with our ancestors centuries ago.

Come with us!

Are you hesitant to respond to the invitation? Hobab certain was. It was not the kind of invitation a Midianite really wanted from a recently freed Hebrew slave nation setting out with little hop of getting where their going. There are enemies out there – big enemies, powerful enemies, prominent enemies... and in a short time spies would be sent out to the land of Canaan and their fearful report would be devastating. But all that is still in the future.

Moses needed more to entice his father-in-law into coming. Then how about we give you a job?

Come with us!

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Moses said: “you will serve as eyes for us.” 1 Corinthians 12 tells us we all have our part to play in the body of Christ... we can’t all be hands and feet and ears... but to be the eyes! To see with greater vision, to look beyond the present place and see from the mountain top the far off promised land –

to be vision when we get stuck on the way.

to be vision when we lose the way.

to be vision when we need to find another way.

to be vision when we need to follow the one who is the way.

“You will serve as eyes for us”... and the Presbyterian Church of St. David served as eyes... gave vision... led the way through the wilderness for virtually every Presbyterian Church that claimed – and reclaimed its place in this region and then beyond to other places in this province... Knox and Calvin and St. Andrew’s and Iona and Lower Sackville and Kings New Minas... and the Presbyterian Association grew and flourished because we knew the journey needed eyes and needed a vision and had to be able to see the mission and ministry ahead of us in 1925...

Come with us and share the journey!

And now we come to 2011 and we have a new situation and a new challenge and a new journey awaiting us – and an invitation to take us to the Promised Land and God’s purpose for us in Christ. This will in no wise resemble the journey of 1925 for our world changed while we worshipped within these walls – a world that once was founded on a faith that long since has ceased to be the guiding light of this nation... but a faith that still challenges us today and guides us into tomorrow. And what a challenge awaits us as we look to our worship and our congregational life... as we look to our Mission and our Outreach... as we seek to be good stewards and generous givers and create good policy and do good planning and rebuild the ancient, and often crumbling, walls and as we embrace a vision that is big enough to take us the next step on the journey. And that’s where you come in. God has blessed this congregation with an abundance of gifted, talented, dedicated and committed members, adherent and friends.

We often forget who we are in the struggle to survive day by day on the difficult journey. We need to remember that we are the church –

The church is Christ together with his people

Called both to worship and serve him in all of life.

We are still the church in 2011 called to glorify and enjoy God... in our worship, by our words, as we witness... to Christ as the way, the truth and the life. We are still those called to walk with Christ as he sets his face steadfastly

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toward Jerusalem and the destiny that await him in Jerusalem. The risen Christ told us to remain where we are until the gift of the Spirit was given us and then we were given the great commission – to go out in to the world... from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria to the uttermost ends of the earth found on this Peninsula where our church finds its home.

Dr. Dickie, thank you for that message that has been our motivation for 86 years... thank you for calling us to the journey ahead and inviting us to a place yet unseen – and how could you possibly have seen where the journey has taken us?

Dr. Dickie, could you imagine in 1925 a pluralistic Canada and a cosmopolitan Halifax in a municipality in which Arabic is the second language of this realm?

Dr Dickie, could you imagine a reconstituted Presbyterian Church in Canada in which women took up their rightful place of leadership, making up almost half the ordained ministry and the ruling eldership?

Dr. Dickie could you even conceive of a church where Korean and Taiwanese and Ghanaian and Hungarian are as readily heard in the courts of the church as the Gaelic tongue that gathered people the previous century?

Dr. Dickie, could you have foreseen the journey ahead of us as the disruption of '25 gave way to the great witness of Presbyterianism recorded in the pages of the Blue Banner from those first days until this 21st century?

And what more can we say to you who gather on this anniversary Sunday?

The message remains: **Come with us and share the journey.** We are desperate for eyes to see the unfolding future. Can you be eyes for the way ahead? Can you be part of the vision that will take us to the place God would have us be in order to be doing the works of Christ today? A special challenge for those who may fall into the younger generation. We need new eyes to see things hidden from many of us – cataracts often cloud clear vision – we need to see that there is a new way though the wilderness, new methods to communicate Christ, a new culture that needs to be addressed.

This invitation of scripture given by Moses can easily be applied to the church today. We are strangers and pilgrims going through this world on our own unique journey – as individuals and as a congregation. We may find ourselves in a wilderness here, but we are on the way to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is with us, a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night and a

Come with us!

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bush that burns and is never consumed! Our invitation is the same invitation that Moses gave Hobab, "Come with us."