

March 6, 2022 - First Sunday of Lent

Meditation: "Journeys"

Did you hear about the three ½ time ministers who met at a conference. They were interested in how the others earned the other half of their income.

The first one said, "I work ½ time as a doctor."

"A doctor," said the other two, "why a doctor?"

"Well," said the first, "Jesus heals, and so do I."

"Very good," said the other two.

Then the second minister said, "I work ½ time as a farmer."

"Why a farmer," inquired the other two.

"Because," said the second minister, "God put Adam in the garden to till it and to keep it."

"That makes sense," said the other two.

Finally, the third minister said, "I work ½ time as a lawyer."

"A LAWYER," exclaimed the other two. "Why in God's name would you work ½ time as a lawyer?"

"Well," said the third minister, "before Jesus healed, before Adam tilled, before there was a garden, God created everything out of chaos."

Chaos. There sure seems to be a lot of that going around these days. There was the chaos in downtown Ottawa. The chaos at the border crossings between Canada and the United States. And I'm sure we all feel like the pandemic brought chaos to our lives and to the world, but it was nothing compared to the chaos that the people of Ukraine are living in right now. The war that Putin is waging against Ukraine ought to serve to remind us of just how blessed we are.

And even though the chaos we have been through in the past two years pales in comparison with the chaos in Ukraine, it has left us weary and longing to take a journey somewhere. Some of us have already travelled, while others dream of a journey to somewhere warm. Still others, like my wife and I, are anticipating the journey we have planned for this summer to Manitoulin Island. And many in Ukraine are undertaking a forced journey; a journey to a safe haven in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, and beyond; a journey to keep their children safe from Putin's bombs.

In the scriptures we hear about many journeys. There was the journey that Abram and his wife, Sarai, undertook from Harran, in present day Turkey, to a land that God promised to show him. They had already travelled from Ur, in present day

Iraq, to Harran, at the urging of this same God, and now this God wanted them to move again, without so much as naming the destination.

The Israelites went on a journey; a journey that lasted forty years; a journey that started in Egypt and ended in a land flowing with milk and honey. The land promised to them and their ancestor Abram, by the God they worshipped.

This morning we read about the journey Jesus took to the wilderness, a dry, dusty, barren wilderness, where he spent 40 days.

Today we are at the beginning of another kind of journey. This journey is not a physical or geographical journey, like the ones we may be dreaming about, or the ones Abram and Sarai undertook, or the one undertaken by the Israelites. Our journey is a spiritual journey; it is a journey of reflection and self-examination; it is the journey of Lent, which started on Wednesday this past week, and ends at Friday's cross. Some, like myself, might even venture so far as to say that our journey is a journey to God's own heart.

Abram's journey was a journey from being an individual, to becoming a people; a people of the covenant with God. The Israelite's journey was a journey from being a captive people, to becoming a nation in their own right. Jesus' journey was a journey from being a carpenter, to becoming a miracle-performing healer, teacher and prophet. Our journey of Lent is from being the people we are today, to a new way of being in this world, a journey Peter described in his first epistle, as becoming a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.

God was there for Abram. God was there for the Israelites. God was there with Jesus in the wilderness. God is there for the people of Ukraine. And God is there waiting for us at the end of our journey. Thanks be to God.