**Text: Luke 9: 51-62**

**Title: Setting our face toward the journey.**

**Rev. Sharon Smith**

**June 30th, 2019**

A legend is told about an Irish monk of the 6th Century named Brendan. Brendan worked to develop monasteries that became centers of prayer and learning for many people.

After a profound and visionary dream, Brendan gathered a group of Celtic monks to join him on a voyage west from Ireland across the Atlantic Ocean in search of the Garden of Eden. This famous voyage lasted 7 years and became famous for the adventures that Brendan and the monks experienced as they explored.

This practice of a pilgrimage, where you set sail in a boat without rudder or oar, letting the currents of love carry them to the place where they would encounter their true selves, or the place of their resurrection is called **Peregrinatio**.

Lifting up their oars and letting the wind take them in the direction of its whim.

This is what St Brendan the Navigator became known for – an outward and an inward journey of trust and yielding.

Brendan’s Celtic prayer – a prayer for the journey of a pilgrim:

“Help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown

Give me faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the mysteries, I trust You to be stronger that each storm within me. I will trust in the darkness and know that my times, even now, are in Your hand. Tune my spirit to the music of heaven and somehow make my obedience count for you.”

Christine Valtners Painter, Illuminating the Way

I have found in life, that a posture of surrendering to what wants to happen is a daily spiritual practice.

And, there are times when we are given a sense of direction.

An eagle eye, a focus that we must go in a certain direction.

The journey of Jesus of Nazareth in Luke 9 is a picture of one of these times.

These verses in Luke chapter 9 begin the middle section of the Gospel of Luke.

Up to this point, Jesus was focused on preparation.

Now he begins the journey towards Jerusalem.

He makes a turn.

Literally – he sets his face toward Jerusalem, it begins what the Synoptic Gospels (Matt, Mark and Luke) call the ‘on the way’ sections.

And in this passage, Jesus is likened to a prophet.

He is compared here to Moses – who sent out messengers to prepare the way for him.

He is likened to Elijah, in his lifting up and in the disciples’ request of him to bring down fire – recalls Elijah and the servants of Baal.

Jesus as prophet, as visionary, is focused.

He will not be distracted – even by customs, by laws or social norms.

Instead he has a deep sense of where he must go.

Luke Timothy Johnson, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke

At this one-year mark of our (you and I) journey together here at St Catherine’s, I have been reflecting on our focus.

I have been impressed by it’s consistency in expression by different groups of people at different moments along the way.

First expressed in the St Catherine’s Mission and Vision statement, from 2017 (Maureen Sims, Diocesan Consultant):

* we welcome you to join us in the journey
* Be an inclusive and thriving community of faith for all generations
* Continually invite others to join us in our journey of faith and Christian discipleship

Then articulated last year in our meet the Vicar groups – where there was considerable interest in activities that invite people, gather people, welcome people.

And further explored in last year’s survey:

Reach out to new young families in Edgemont 2.98

One person commented: We will have 150 new residents across the street.

And this year - Parish Council continue to build this vision and set goals:

* to be welcoming, to become diverse in age, in culture, in sexual orientation by welcoming 15 new people into our community each year…

**For when we consider the population of the district of North Vancouver from the 2016 census we see:**

The age distribution:

0-14 years is 17.1%

15-64 is 65.3%

65 and over is 17.5%

**And in our parish this is skewed.**

In addition when we look at the immigration patterns we see:

People born in Iran and the Phillipines have overtaken immigration from people born in the United Kingdom by leaps and bounds since 2011.

Iran: 1,165

Philippines: 765

UK: 200

Who will move into the apartments on Ridgewood?

Is there place for our neighbours in and among us? Are we making room?

How will we build relationships with our new neighbours?

So I love what **Richard Wagamese writes in Embers: One Ojibway’s meditations:**

How to make a dream come true:

Don’t focus on the dream, or it will always remain a dream

Instead focus on the first action you can take to bring that dream a little closer

Then take it.

Now focus on the next action, and take that.

Each step brings the dream closer to becoming reality

Why?

Our elders teach that the dream world and the real world operate on the same energy.

You link them through the power of choice.

Choose action and the dream moves ever closer to the real.

So we are working on ways to:

* Make our Ridgewood access welcoming, accessible
* Open up our Narthex
* Build up our Sunday School
* Build structures that will welcome and greet new comers

These are our first steps as a Parish Council

**AND**

We all have work to do!

For welcoming people in, requires that each of us adapt.

It requires our evolution as a community.

And when we think of the process of evolution, we see that

(1) it preserves the DNA essential for the species’ continued survival;

(2) it discards (re-regulates or re-arranges) the DNA that no longer serves the species’ current needs; and

(3) it creates DNA arrangements that give the species’ the ability to flourish in new ways and in more challenging environments.

And so it will be for our adaption or evolution:

We will preserve the DNA that is already us. That which is unique to St Catherines’.

We will be looking at the things that no longer serve us well

And we will be experimenting with new arrangements so that we can flourish, new ways for this new environment.

For we are pilgrims as we follow this way of Jesus.

**David Whyte in his book Consolations, writes:**

“Pilgrim is a word that accurately describes the average human being – someone on their way somewhere else… someone who underneath it all doesn’t quite understand from whence or from where their next bite of bread will come, someone dependent on help from absolute strangers and from those who travel with them.

The great measure of human maturation is the increasing understanding that we move through life in the blink of an eye, that we are not long with the privilege of having eyes to see, ears to hear, a voice with which to speak and arms to put round a loved one, that we are simply passing through.

We are creatures made real through contact, meeting and then moving on…

Human life is contact, getting to know and a moving beyond that enlarge and strengthen us to the ones that turn us…

We are so much made of movement that we speak of the destination being both inside and beyond us, we sense **we are the journey along the way**.”

Amen