

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Easter 7
Saturday, May 15, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 16, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

“The Road to Life”

John 17:11b-19

Christ is Risen!! He is Risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

As I recently returned from the longest vacation/journey I have ever taken with Malinda (just shy of 3000 miles of total driving), I was reminded of an old proverb which says, “A road is a place on which you journey, it is not a destination.” On Monday morning, I went back to St. James to teach the 5th and 6th grade class. From now until the end of the school year (which is this coming week), we are going through as much of the book of Acts as time allows.

On Tuesday, our first reading appointed for today was our lesson. After spending two days on Acts chapter one, it hit me that we are not going to get through too much of the book of Acts. As the school year is winding down, we are reminded that this is a time of significant change and moving on for so many of our young people especially. And compared to this time last year, we have all seen significant change – thanks be to God.

The reality is that most everyone knows someone graduating from some level of schooling. Beyond that, my social media timeline keeps me up to date on the changes and milestones among my family and friends. In social media memes

and graduation speeches, around this time each year we get to hear the cliched “Road of life” metaphors.

I am not a big fan of “Road of life” metaphors. As the proverb says, “A road is a place on which you journey, it is not a destination.” This journey we are on is the “Road **to** life”, not “of life”.

Those graduating from grade school, high school, college these days will be congratulated numerous times for having really accomplished something – and I do not diminish any accomplishments or milestones. But the truth is, the changes, accomplishments, and milestones in our lives are just part of the road.

Now, this does not mean that we should not enjoy and appreciate the journey. One of my favorite bits of advice to my daughters is “enjoy the journey.” Over the years, I have given that advice to them to the extent that I believe they have grown tired of hearing me say that.

And focusing our attention on this as it pertains to us as children of God, there is much to enjoy. We began our journey at the font. God placed each of us on the path of His choosing. And His Word has been a lamp to our feet and a light to our path ever since, as the Psalmist says.

But the path (the road) is not the destination. There is a goal. There is an end. There is a fulfillment of God’s plan. The road (and the end of the road) are all God’s choosing, and we are to come before Him and say “Thy will be done” and mean it. Thy will not my will. The changes in life (some we like, some we grumble about), the accomplishments, the milestones are all a part of God’s will and plan to get us to the destination. He has done all the work and made all the arrangements.

It's like what we see with Matthias who was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the 12. He is remembered and honored by the church as an apostle of Jesus. What is it that Matthias did to deserve this honor and position? He didn't do anything. He was one of the believers who Christ called early in His ministry. He was there from the baptism of John until Christ's Ascension into heaven.

We can certainly make the argument that Matthias did do something in that he remained faithful while others fell away – namely Judas. Remaining in faith is certainly an important “something.” But we hear how this was accomplished in our Gospel reading. As Christ prays, He says, “While I was with them, I kept them in Your Name, which You have given Me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

The disciple's faithfulness, Matthias' faithfulness, your faithfulness, my faithfulness is the result of God's work and God's protection. In Baptism, we were given God's Name, and we have been kept in that Name. Within the protection of His Church, Christ has guarded us. We have now become the witnesses of the resurrection – bearing witness to this world that Christ is Risen!! He is Risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

As we travel down our “Road to Life”, sharing that journey with our brothers and sisters in Christ, it is a lot like being on an extended family vacation. We have a destination which is the goal, but there is an “are we there yet?” journey to take place.

Malinda and I did not have children in the backseat on our vacation, but on

a typical family vacation the cliched comparisons are endless. Brothers and sisters are both a source of joy and entertainment, and a source of frustration. “She’s touching me; She’s looking at me.” Sin and grace abound on our journey. And just like dealing with the annoying looks from our siblings in the backseat of the car, we are called to be gracious, not easily angered, patient, and forgiving. Our Father is guiding us along the appointed path ensuring that we will reach our destination in the time of His choosing.

On this journey, the world will hate you, because the world hated Christ first. The “Road to Life” is not an easy journey. It is the narrow path. The good thing with our Father in heaven is that we know He will never “turn this car around if you kids don’t shape up.” He is patient, slow to anger, forgiving, and abounding in steadfast love, as Scripture repeatedly says. Yet, He does discipline us. His children do not get to do whatever they want whenever they want. No one would want to be on a journey where the kids make all the decisions and set all the guidelines. That would be the road to the opposite place and a journey none of us would want to take.

As we continue on our “Road to Life”, remember to enjoy the journey, but also remember that the “road is a place on which you journey, it is not a destination.” There is a greater destination in God’s plan. It is the empty tomb. The empty tomb is the reality of Christ’s saving work and will remain our focus even when this Easter season has ended. The resurrection of Jesus is the truth we proclaim. The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting is the goal of us all, and is the blessed end of our road to life. Amen.

Christ is Risen!! He is Risen indeed!! Alleluia!!