

March 7, 2021 The Way Pt. Mark 1:35-39

Dearly Beloved;

I am beginning with 2 short announcements this morning. First, today in the sanctuary we are marking our return to in-person worship with the Celebration of the Lord's Supper. I am eager to remind you that if you are staying at home you too can be included in the sacramental circle. Get a glass of wine, or fruit juice, a piece of bread, or a soda cracker. Pray a simple prayer like: I remember your broken body as I eat this bread. (eat) And then, Lord, I remember your blood shed for me. (drink). The formal ceremony we use in the sanctuary boils down to these 2 simple acts. And if you are reading this before coming to in-person worship, I would remind you that a cracker, or a piece of bread, can be brought to the sanctuary for your personal use in place of the wafer.

Second announcement has to do with vaccinations. Things are changing quickly with the approval by Health Canada of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Our Premier is now talking about having Ontario vaccinated by the end of June. May it be so!! I simply want to remind you I will be vaccinated as soon as I get the opportunity. I urge you to consider (if you have not decided) to do the same. All of the vaccines approved for Canada's use have one simple characteristic in common. No one who has had these vaccines, if they contracted Covid-19 has had to be hospitalized, in the whole world. No one who has contracted Covid-19, has died having had these vaccines. Vaccination increases your safety in the current environment in which we are operating. Yes, we

will have to continue to mask, socially distance, wash our hands and use hand sanitizer. BUT... we will be safer than we have been, for the last year. Remember, I want you to be safe. Praising God, for the week just passed, I will turn to the Word.

This series for the season of Lent, is entitled The Way. You know, and I know, and Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." As HIS disciples in the world of 2021, when we follow HIM, we are following the way. In part 1 of this series last week we revisited the portion in Mark chapter 1, in which Jesus called Peter and Andrew (for whom this church is named), and James and John. They were called as we are called to do the first thing disciples do. Disciples follow. Disciples of Jesus follow Jesus. It is that simple act, simple does not mean it is easy. Simple means the act is singular in significance. We strive to follow Jesus. HE is the way.

There is something else to remember about this. An old song contained the line, I liked the version sung by Nat King Cole, doesn't that date me! "Get your kicks on Route 66." Almost all of us who are old enough to remember that song understood even when we were young, Route 66 is a highway, a highway like 62. You follow that highway you can get to Stirling. You can get to Madoc. You can get to Bancroft. Here is the point. The New Testament documents were written in Greek. Why? Because Greek was the international language of the time of Jesus, as English is an international language of this era. The word hodos in Greek which translates way, is the same word you would use if you were telling someone you were

walking to Jericho by means of the Jericho road. Jesus is the way. If we follow HIM down this particular route, we will get somewhere, our destination, our destiny. We will reach the Kingdom of God.

I chose and read the portion from Mark 1 beginning at verse 35 this morning for this reason. It describes the way Jesus lived when HE was here on earth. There are lessons here for us to live our lives by, while we are here on earth. It's a "way map." A road map for people who believe Jesus and want to follow HIM. That's who we are. It doesn't mean we are morally superior to our neighbours. It doesn't mean we have all the answers. It does mean we are not lost, we have found the way home. There are things we can do to stay safe and stay on the road.

Jesus got up early on this particular morning. It was still dark outside. I confess, I am not very good at getting up early, before sunrise, and never have been. I can do it, but I don't particularly like it. And in the self-isolating regimen of a Covid-19 world, I sleep later in the morning these days than I have done in a long, long time. But Jesus had a way of doing things. HE rose early. And HE probably went to bed when it got dark. He followed the rhythms of creation itself. The question is why? "He left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." It was not that Jesus liked to get up while it was dark. He prioritized prayer. And he prioritized praying by himself. He did not take Peter, Andrew, James and John with HIM. Prayer was a priority. And Jesus got it done first. And

really underline, Jesus got it done. It was HIS way. He did not leave it to chance. He didn't let something else come first, or distract HIM from HIS time for seeking the presence of HIS heavenly Father.

When Simon Peter and the others got up, what was their priority? Where is Jesus? Where has HE gone? What's HE doing? And when they found Jesus, what did they say? Jesus, everyone is looking for you! Now you need to know, I skipped over a portion we will look at next week. Jesus had spent the day before healing people. We have been taught a huge lesson by this Pandemic of Covid-19. And I must admit I am upset and confused by the fact that not everyone seems to get it. A year ago there was not medicine for Covid-19 and no safe preventative medicine. We should have realized by now how vulnerable we are. How dangerous it is to live in a world where infection is unpreventable, and can make you so sick there is nothing medicine can do. And it isn't just the young. There are still men my age walking around in grocery stores with a mask over their mouths and uncovering their noses. I saw 2 of them in the grocery store on Friday. Jesus had been healing the sick. Saving lives. Yes, everyone is looking for Jesus! He is the way. The way to live. To overcome. To find health and wholeness. Peter and his companions want Jesus to come back to the house, heal some more people, God, that was neat! They do not even notice they have interrupted Jesus at prayer in their enthusiasm.

What does Jesus say? No. Let's go somewhere else...the nearby villages. "So I can preach there also. So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons...that is why I have come." Jesus is the way. And His way is to prioritize prayer. Having spent time with His Father, HE knows what he should do today. Time is a very limited commodity. HE did what HE did yesterday, because that was what HE was supposed to do yesterday. Today...something else to do...somewhere else to be. Doing what the Father has revealed to HIM to do. He doesn't take orders from HIS disciples. HE gives them instruction. HE leads them down the road. There is only so much time. And notice: this is chapter 1 and only verse 38. "This is why I have come." Jesus is already aware the cross is waiting for HIM in Jerusalem. HE has places to be and things to do, and sand is running through the hour glass. These are the days of our lives. Two years may seem a long time. Jesus spent two years in Galilee. He spent part of a day on the cross on the outskirts of Jerusalem. "This is why I have come." Three years that are a part of a single piece of what Jesus came to do. And what it all amounts to is this: HE wants us to follow HIM. He is the way. The Road. The route to the abundant life. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, Holy God;

Remind us that it matters, the way we go, the choices and priorities we strike. Lead us and guide us. Shape us and mold us. Help us to find our way, in you who is the way, the truth and the life." Amen