

“Ready to Go with Food for the Journey and a Map for the Road”

Exodus 12: 1-18-31-42

This Sunday we are beginning our Summer Series: Road Trip! How many of us remember taking various road trips over the years? Hitting the open road to see the sights, discovering new things, trying out new experiences, being trapped in a car for hours, and of course...listening to that one person ask over and over again....Are we there yet?

This summer we will be taking a road trip with the people of God. Along the way we will encounter road blocks and detours. We will experience tourist traps and of course, we will hear the people ask over and over again...Are we there yet?

To begin our journey, we need to refresh our memory about this particular road trip for the people of God. If we remember, it took 40 years. It was journey on which two generations of Israelites faced multiple hardships while living into this new dimension of their relationship with God. This was not just a trip from point A to point B. It was something more for them.

It became an opportunity for the people to rediscover their identity as the people of God, to enter into a new covenant with their God. They grew in relationship with one another and struggled with the questions of what it meant to

live in community. Their journey of new discoveries and heart breaking disappointments became a framework for understanding who they are and whose they are. Just like it does for us

For the people of God, past, present and future, this road trip is a gift. It is an opportunity for us to understand, to grapple with, to discern more about our own journeys of faith. The rituals, the symbols, the good and the bad experiences which the people have along the way while wandering for 40 years desert, all these things become tools which help us talk about and celebrate the twists and turns we all take and experience along the way as people of faith.

This particular road trip we are taking with the people of Israel shows us that journeys of faith are not easy. They have ups and downs. They contain the good, the bad, the ugly and the breath-takingly beautiful. It also serves to remind us that no matter how far we wander, God is always there for us, guiding us, leading us, bringing us back home.

So to that end, let us begin our journey together, discovering the people God created us to be, discovering the people of hope, faith and love that God calls us to be.

READ THE TEXT!!

As with any journey, there is always a starting place. For the Israelites, that starting place was Egypt. It was a place where for generations, God's people had lived and thrived until a new king came along. We are told at the beginning of Exodus a new king came to power. Everything changed for the people of God, all because this new king did not know Joseph. This new king did not know the stories of how the people of Israel came to be in Egypt, how Joseph served previous pharaohs and magnified the wealth of Egypt.

This new king came along and he did not know. He saw these Israelites as a threat. He saw them as the "other". He took a look at the Israelites and instead of seeing people created in the image of God, he saw rather people who didn't look like him, people who didn't act like him, people who didn't think like him. So he became afraid of these others. He spoke to his people out of this fear. He stirred up the masses, playing on their worries and anxieties. He said things like, "There are just too many of them around. They outnumber us. If we go to war, they will go against us and our very way of life will be lost. We must contain them somehow."

At this point in the story, we are told, this new king began to organize ways to gain power and control over the Israelite people. He started work gangs, having them make bricks for the buildings and structures of his empire. This new king began to take away the rights of the Israelite people until finally...finally...the

people of Israel become slaves. Their only purpose was to serve and maintain the power structures of the Egyptian empire.

This, this...brokenness, this oppression, this way of being which consisted of brick quotas, broken backs and bitter lives, this, this is where God breaks in and brings a new beginning for the people of God.

We are told that God heard the people's cries and called Moses to lead the people out of Egypt into a land which God had prepared for them. And now on the night before their journey is to take place, Moses tells them to prepare a feast, to gather for a meal. This meal will change their lives forever. It will bring them closer to their God and become a roadmap for how they are to live out their lives as the people of God. For at the very core of this meal is an understanding that God is still at work, redeeming God's people, that God's grace is enough to sustain them. The very purpose of this meal is to give the people of God a new starting place to tell our stories. This starting place is not bound to the power structures of this world. No, this starting place is centered and grounded in the transformative power of God's love for God's people.

Let me explain... This feast which we read about today later becomes known as the Passover meal. Each and every year, people within the Jewish tradition gather to participate in this feast. They do not gather in synagogues, in Temples, or

in structures connected to institutions in any way. Rather, the people gather in homes, in the very places which are defined by close relationship, to share a meal which celebrates the time when God brought the people out of brokenness into wholeness.

Through the liturgy and the rituals which surround this meal, there is a remembering for the people of God. It is a remembering of where they have been. It is a remembering of who they were. It is a remembering of how God has acted in the past. But this meal is so much more than just a remembering. It is also a celebration, a celebration of how God is still working to redeem God's people. It is a celebration of God's abundance which fills our lives. It is a celebration that our God continues to guide us and lead us as the people of God.

This simple meal of bread and cup, of bitter herbs and sweet treats becomes a reorientation for the people of God. It becomes an embodiment of hope made real. It becomes an opportunity the people to vision a better world, where all have enough to eat, where all are welcome, where all are embraced as Beloved children of God...just as it does for us when we gather around the table to partake in the bread of life and the cup of the new covenant, each and every week as disciples of Christ. Because you see, our weekly communion has its roots in the Passover meal. In the Gospels, we are told, that Jesus gathered in the upper room to partake in the Passover meal with his disciples.

Each and every week when we gather at the table, we are remembering and celebrating. We are remembering where we have been. We are celebrating where we are going as disciples of Christ. Each week when we gather around the table, it is the loudest proclamation we can make that this world does not have the last word. Each week, when we gather around the table, just like the Israelites all those years ago, we eat the bread, we drink the cup and then we go. We go out into the world, we go on our journeys of faith, always connected to the grace and love of God.

As the people of God, this is more than a simple meal. Every time we gather at the table, it is a new beginning for us. It is an opportunity for us to move from living in the darkness to stepping out into the light of God's love for us. This meal of bread and cup becomes food for our journey.

For as one commentator put it..."Wherever we live right now, it is probably Egypt in some way or fashion, [This may be true for us personally but it is definitely true for us as a society. We are surrounded by stories of hurt and brokenness, of death and oppression. We know that this is not what God intended for us, for creation when God proclaimed it good.] We know there is a better land, a better world, a better way that could be established were we not stuck in Egypt. The only way to get to this better land is by joining together and marching toward it. The [Passover meal] speaks directly to the relocation and reformation of our

souls. [It reminds us that we as the people of God are] part and parcel to the work of bringing God's Kingdom revolution into the here and now." This meal becomes a road map for us, giving us directions on how we are to live out our lives as people of faith...always ready to go when God calls, hearts and minds open to where God leads, always ready to go when God calls, with nothing in our hands to keep us bound to the hurt and hate of the past.

This is our new beginning...an invitation to gather around the table, to break bread with one another, and to remember and celebrate...to remember who we are, to remember of whose we are, an invitation to celebrate our God, a God who is still very much active in this world bringing healing and wholeness to all of God's people. We know this to be true because in a world of brick quotas, broken backs, and bitter lives, God has heard our cries. We no longer have to be stuck in Egypt, where our only purpose is in serving and maintaining the power structures of this world. Today and all days, God is extending an invitation for us to begin anew.

Don't worry. We aren't going on this road trip alone. God providing us with food for the journey and a map for the road. All we have to do is be ready to go.

May it be so. Amen.