

“You’ve Arrived at Your Destination”

Deuteronomy 30: 9-14; 34: 1-4

You’ve Arrived at Your Destination! Are there any greater words in the English language? After hours and hours of being stuck in the car, after countless games of punch buggy and car bingo, after endless stops at every rest area and restaurant drive thrus, after all the whining, complaining and back seat driving, after all the many, many traffic jams, detours and road blocks, to finally hear the GPS speak the words, “You’ve Arrived at Your Destination. Is there any sweeter sound than this? Just at the mention of these five little words, angels begin to sing and resounding Hallelujahs burst forth.

These five little words free us from the confined spaces of our vehicles. They invite us to put the car in park, get out to stretch our legs and behold the beauty which surrounds us. Of course, these five little words don’t complete the journey. We still have to find a place to park, find out in which room we are staying, discover if it is humanly possible to carry all those bags and suitcases up to that room in just one trip, figure out how the hotel key works and last but not least...find the light switch so we don’t crack our knee on the always present desk chair when we enter the room.

However, these five little words, “You’ve Arrived at Your Destination” do signal a transition in our journeys. They let us know we are switching gears, moving us from traveler to encouraging us to put down roots and stay awhile. These five words let us know that our status is changing. They do so by shifting our mindset from what we used to know (hours and hours of being confined to a car) to what we are experiencing what we have anticipated and hoped for all along on this journey (a relaxing vacation where everyone gets along).

Although, these five words do have the power to free us, they don’t actually tell the complete story. These words can only get us so far. They bring us to a point on a map. From that point on, it is up to us to decide what we will do next. Once we arrive at our destination, it is up to us to live out the remaining details of our stay. The GPS can only tell us how to get from point a to point b. It cannot tell us what we need to do in order to experience fully the beauty and wonder of such a place. You see, on our road trips, we tend to assume that destination is the purpose of the journey. We forget that how we experience and explore that destination is really the important part. Because like in life, when we arrive at our destinations, we have a choice. We can either sit in our hotel rooms, locking ourselves away, disconnected from the rest of the world which of course is no fun or...or we step out and experience our destination fully by building relationships with our family, interacting with strangers that we meet, by trying new things, seeing new sights,

and of course, learning about the culture which makes such a place unique. Just because we've arrived at our destination doesn't mean the journey is complete. In many cases, it means the adventure has just started.

(Read the TEXT)

As our summer road trip series draws to a close, an obvious reading would have been a passage which details how the people actually crossed into the Promise Land. But I'm not sure that would have given us an accurate picture of what really happened. You see, the entering into the Promise Land wasn't a one and done event. It wasn't like the people crossed the Jordan River and everything stopped. All their problems solved. It wasn't like after they arrived in the promise land that the people immediately started living out the covenant. It wasn't like they became model citizen in the Kingdom of Heaven here on Earth. We know this is not true. Because shortly, after they crossed into the Promised Land, they disobeyed God. Arriving at their destination didn't complete their story. It didn't complete their journey. It did however begin a new chapter in their lives as the people of God because now that they were there, they had to figure out how to be the people of God in this new land. No excuses. Nothing to distract them. It was time to put down some roots and discover what it meant to be in community with one another and with their God.

For the people, arriving into the Promise Land was a signal that their status had changed. No longer were they slaves in Egypt. No longer were they wandering in the wilderness. Now, they were free, empowered to become the people God created and called them to be. How they did this was up to them. They had a choice...either figure it out or go back to the ways which oppressed them.

In order to help with this transition, with their choice, Moses gives this lengthy speech, reminding them of their covenant with God, reminding them of their promise to be God's people, reminding them that they have been set aside as holy so that all who encounter them will know the presence and love of God.

Moses tells the people over and over again to remain faithful to the commandments given to them by their God. Because not to do so would be living against the way of God. It would be living backwards which if you take the word live and flip it around it is EVIL. Moses begs the people to choose Life, to love God with all their heart, with all their mind and with all their strength. Moses reminds them again who they are and whose they are, telling them if they do this, this new beginning will be filled with wholeness for not just them but for all of God's people.

He tells them that the Vision of the Kingdom of God will come to reality here in their midst if only they live according to God's will which is to love God

and love neighbor. Moses ends his speech by telling them that they have everything they need in order to live in the ways of God, that it is written upon their hearts, it is placed in the minds, it is there on their tongues. They need to look no farther than what they have already experienced and know about their God to know that all this is true. The last thing Moses tells the people is this...God asks this of you not because God is ordering you or demanding it of you. God asks this of you because God has already surrounded us with grace and love. We live our lives, centered in the presence of God, sharing God's love and grace with others as a response, as a response to what God has done and continues to do to bring healing and wholeness for all of God's people.

Or let me say it this way...In the rabbinic tradition, it is said of this passage where God shows Moses the promise land that God does this as a gift for Moses. Moses knows that he cannot enter into the promise land because he did not listen to God's word. However God want to show Moses that his journey was not in vain, that he had brought the people to their promised destination, sometimes kicking and screaming but that they had arrived. God shows Moses the whole land at peace. Then God shows Moses the land filled with brokenness. In the first vision, Moses sees the beauty and wonder that fills the place when the people are at peace. Then in the second vision, he sees the land destroyed by each tribes' greed and apathy. In the second vision, Moses sees one tribe constantly fighting with each

other and with the surrounding tribes, taking more than their share, using and abusing the land and each other. In the second vision, Moses sees one tribe, the tribe set apart to lead the people in faith, he sees this tribe supporting out dated institutions while ignoring the orphans, the widows, and the least of these. In the second vision, Moses sees one tribe plotting and planning, trying to figure out how they could become the greatest of them all, setting up their own king to rule over everyone. In the second vision, Moses sees all the tribes of Israel ignoring the commandments and living life against the will of God.

So Moses turns to God and asks, “Why are you showing me this? After all that we have been through on this journey, why are you showing me this? I cannot lead these people anymore. They are a stiff necked people. After all that they experienced on their journey, are you telling me that they will choose death and oppression over life?”

God simply says, “I show you this, the good and the bad, the unjust and the just, so that you will remember, so that you will tell my people, so that you will open their eyes to see the justice and injustices in their midst. I show you all this to let you know their journey is not complete. I will continue to guide them. I will continue to lift up prophets to speak, lift up people to teach, lift up people to make justice, live in Kindness. No matter what, I will still be in their midst, fulfilling the promises that I gave to their ancestors. I show you all this to let you know that the

people have a choice. You brought them to their destination. What they do from this point on is up to them.” Amen.