

## Devotion April 15, 2020 "Journeying"

Scripture: James 4:13-17 and Psalm 23:4

### **James 4:13-17 (NIV)**

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the LORD'S will, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."

### **Psalm 23:4 (NIV)**

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me."

We had a Beagle named Wags. He was the happiest dog; we chose his name because he always was wagging his tail. Wags loved going for rides in the car. Bruce took him everywhere. These days I feel a bit like Wags, looking forward to going for a ride in the car! Sometimes Wags wandered. As a Beagle with his nose to the ground, he would follow a scent. He would go on a little journey and sometimes he would get lost. Bruce would whistle and Wags would hear him and come running home.

We have been on a journey during the last four and a half weeks, but we haven't gone anywhere, we have been home. We have been on a journey of lessons, learning how to make do with what we have, how to occupy our days of isolation, how to hold on to hope, how to stay safe. We all have had to learn new things. As a church we have had to learn how to worship in a different way. Some pastors asked their congregations to send in pictures of themselves and the pastors taped the pictures to the pews so when preaching from an empty sanctuary they saw the faces of the congregation. It's a nice sentiment; some people liked the idea, and some thought it was foolish. The thing is, pastors miss their congregations just as the congregations miss the pastors and each other. During this time of isolation, this loss of face to face time becomes difficult and we yearn for contact with our family and friends.

I received a call from someone last week. They told me how they had been listening to Christian music, something they enjoyed, but she yearned to be connected to the church. They asked if the carillons could be played so people could come and stay in their cars and listen to the music. I thought it was a good idea and asked our music director to arrange it. We all appreciate him pushing the button or flipping the switch so everyone could hear the music each day during Holy Week. What was needed was a physical connection of some sort.

When we worship, we enjoy the music and fellowship. The most important part of worship is connecting to God. This happens through hearing the Word proclaimed and participating in prayers to God.

Just as our little Wags wandered, we too wander. We get off the path and need to hear the voice of God calling us back. In James, we learn that relying on our own ideas, our own voice saying "I will do this or that", we should be relying on what God's will for us is. We become wandering people as Wags was a wandering Beagle. Some may be doing a bit of wandering now, and the wandering comes from our fear, fear of the unknown. Here's the thing, in Psalm 23:4 it tells us that God is with us, even in the valley of the shadow of death, we should not fear!

We miss our church life; we miss our friends and family. We miss going out to eat, we miss hearing someone's voice. I miss hearing Bruce's voice even though we do Facetime several times a day. I talk to our pets. Shadow, our cat talks back, telling me it's time to eat. Even our cat Twerp has become clingy, very unusual for him. We all miss Bruce. But I hold on to the hope that Bruce will be home, and we will learn our new normal together.

We wander, get off track and it's the voice of Jesus calling us back. It may be scripture, it may be through other people, or it may be circumstances that call us back. We all get off the track but when we hear James 4:13-17 and Psalm 23:4 we get that tug or hear the voice that brings us back to the right path. Yes, God is with us all the time! God gives us what we need, all the time! With this knowledge we are able to continue on the path God has put us on. We can continue to celebrate Easter with joy. We must continue to share this good news, that Jesus Christ has risen, Halleluiah, Amen!

Let us pray: Gracious and loving God, we thank You for the gift of Jesus, that through His death and resurrection we will have eternal life. We ask healing and comfort for those in the world who are suffering, for those who are facing serious medical issues, for the caregivers, for those who are alone. Help us to remember we do not know what today or tomorrow will bring, but that you are our Shepherd who guides us and gives us hope. Keep us strong and confident and on the path of righteousness. Amen

Blessings,  
*Pastor Linda*