



Sermon for Maundy Thursday. April 14, 2022 -- Sacred Journeys

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene
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[Exodus 12:1-4, \[5-10\], 11-14; John 13:1-17, 31b-35](#)

Good and loving God, our times are in your hands. Help us to make the most of what we have been graciously given; to love our neighbors and strive for justice and peace. Amen

Our Diocesan theme for this coming year is, "On a Sacred Journey." There are many journey stories in literature, popular culture and scripture. Often the story begins with an out-of-the-ordinary beginning for the main character. There is a 'calling' of some kind -- a 'quest', which the main character may, for a time, refuse but eventually, with promise of support from a mentor, chooses to accept. There are challenges along the way, but the main character gains insight and grows in wisdom. Ultimately they return to their home changed, to share with others what they have learned on the journey and, as they say at Disneyland, live happily ever after.

We have followed the sacred journey of Moses from his birth in genocidal times; how he was rescued from the river by an Egyptian princess, cared for by his biological mother and grew up in the royal household. As an adult, Moses observed the harsh forced labor of his kinsmen and when he saw an Egyptian beating one of them, he murdered the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. "When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian." [Ex 10:15] Moses married a daughter of the Priest of Midian and that is how he came to be keeping the flock of his father-in-law at Horeb, the mountain of God, when he saw the burning bush, and received instructions from God that he was to go back to Egypt and "tell Pharaoh to let my people go." Moses did not want to leave Midian or return to Egypt. He argued with God, but to no avail.

Pharaoh and Moses' negotiations to free the Israelites from slavery and allow all of them to leave Egypt with all of their possessions failed in spite of water turning to blood; infestations of frogs, gnats, and flies; livestock pestilence; boils; hail; swarms of locusts; and three days of darkness because, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was unwilling to let them go." [Ex 10:27] Then "the Lord said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go from here; indeed, when he lets you go, he will drive you away."" [Ex 11:1].

Today's verses from Hebrew scripture are God's instructions to the Israelites so that they will survive the last plague that will be imposed on the Egyptians, the death of every firstborn, "from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the livestock." [Ex 11:5] Every household in the congregation was to slaughter a lamb, and put some of its blood on the doorposts and the front beam of their houses so that death would pass over that home. They are to be in a hurry! Don't boil the lamb all day. Roast it and eat it all. Don't wait for the bread

to rise before you bake it. Don't come to the table barefooted and in your PJ's. Be dressed, shod, armed with a staff, and ready to leave – fight or flight!

“This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.” [Ex 12:14a] Over 1500 years later¹ Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples and, more than 2000 years after that, observant Jews around the world commemorate the original Passover [2022, Friday evening, April 15 -- Saturday evening, April 23].

Writings in the New Testament tell stories of Jesus; how he was born, how he lived – what he believed, what he taught, what he did, how he died, and that he transcended death. We have been following the journey of Jesus from Bethlehem to Egypt, to Nazareth and on his path through the many places where he ministered. We know that Jesus was a man of deep humility; one who promoted God's domination-free society as Lord AND Servant-King. He preached that every thing in God's creation is beyond price and precious in God's sight. He ate with sinners and condemned no one. Judas journeyed with him and sat at his table. Surely Jesus washed Judas' feet in the same way he did the others'.

As followers of Christ, I wonder how our sacred journeys can intersect and even intertwine with that of Jesus; a man from so long ago and yet Immanuel, God with us. Jesus' short but sacred life journey was poured out for all future generations, for you and for me, a life of abundant and unconditional love. At the last supper with his disciples Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” [John 13:34-35]

I wonder, do we love as Jesus loved? Can that “love so deep, so broad, so high” [Hymnal 1982 #448] be comprehended and expressed by ‘mere mortals?’ Is that possible? Do we walk as children of the light, loving God with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind [Mt 22:37] and all our might [Deut 6:5]? Do we love our neighbors as ourselves and respect the dignity of every human being?

I believe each person is on a unique journey; our lives formed by every step we take and every step we mis-take. I fall short; miss the mark. “Day by day, day by day, O, dear Lord, three things I pray: to see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly, day by day.” [Hymnal 1982 #654] Gracious Lord, hear my prayer.

First thing in the morning, I say, “Thank you God for bringing me to the beginning of this new day, especially since I messed up so many times yesterday. Help me to keep my steps on Your path. Help me to honor Your words of love, not only with my lips, but in my life.” I will with God's help. Amen.

¹ https://www.answers.com/Q/How_many_years_between_Passover_and_Jesus%27_death