

“The Road Less Traveled”

Matthew 16:21-23

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Frankfort, Kentucky

July 2, 2017

Communion Devotion

There are two kinds of courage in our world. First is the courage that rises to the occasion in an emergency or a crisis.

Adversity brings the best out in some people, and aren't we glad? We need people around us who are strong and steady when the world is spinning out of control.

There is also a courage that chooses to do the difficult when everyone else avoids it. This road, the one less traveled as Dr. M. Scott Peck referred to it, is paved with noble dreams, grand visions, selflessness, passion, commitment, sacrifice and generosity.

The fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia in 1776 had the kind of courage that chooses to do the difficult. Listen as I read the final words of this historic document.

“We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”

The people who made this pledge knew they were heading down the road less traveled, the one paved with sweat, tears and sacrifice. One by one, they marched into the eye of a storm.

So did Jesus.

“From that time on, Jesus began to explain to the disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’

Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’ ” (Matthew 16:23)

When a person chooses to do the difficult in spite of overwhelming resistance, you know they possess the highest level of courage that can be exhibited. Jesus refused to take the easy way out even when his closest ally tried to persuade him to do it.

Why was Jesus so insistent upon attending Passover that year in Jerusalem? Why was he willing to walk into the eye of a storm?

He believed it was time to confront the religious authorities on their turf for their hypocrisy and insincerity. He had come to the conclusion they cared more about their own wellbeing than the welfare of those God called them to serve. To Jesus, the ruling elders appeared to be addicted to power, prestige, attention and money. They were driven by selfishness and greed, and their lives in no way reflected the heart and nature of God, at least not the God he knew so well.

Did Jesus know his life would be in danger for speaking truth to power? Was he aware that the High Priest and many who followed his lead would stop at nothing to discredit him and to silence his voice?

Yes, he knew, but he also knew he would disappoint God and those who needed him to offer an alternative voice and vision if he took the path of least resistance. Being faithful to God and helping those who were struggling to survive were more important to him than his personal safety.

This is the highest level of courage.

Later on, Thomas would follow Jesus' lead. "Let us also go that we may die with him," Thomas said to the other disciples when Jesus told them plainly he was going to Bethany, less than two miles from Jerusalem, to help his dear friend, Lazarus. (John 11:16) Thomas voiced the fears and anxieties of every disciple, but he also matched the courage of Jesus by refusing to abandon Jesus in perilous times.

What road do you need to travel down that requires this kind of courage? Will you ask God to help you take that first step?