

In this year when our worship theme is *New Beginnings*, our message this morning is entitled *End of the Road*.

As many of you know, each summer we send an Appalachian Mission Team to Tennessee, to share the Word of God, to bring the love of Christ. 3 dozen of our folks usually make the journey to Sunset Gap in Cosby, folks ranging in age from 8th graders through those with “snow on the roof” as one of our Council members put it Tuesday night. And it’s a long journey...thirteen hours if we have no bus problems. We leave here right after second service on July 4, which means we arrive there around midnight. We’re fortunate that we get on the interstate a mile down the road here, and we’re on interstates till we get within 15 miles of camp. Once we get off the interstate the roads get smaller, and smaller and smaller. Particularly as we climb the last mountain into our little holler. And when we get to the Gap after our 13 hour journey there is always a sense of relief and joy that we are there safely. We’d made it to the *end of the road*.

It’s odd how that phrase can be used. Often it means the end of a journey, like our trip. Sometimes it means you’ve run out of options and there’s no place else to go.

Both of our Gospel readings this morning seem to capture both of these meanings at once.

Luke’s Gospel is 24 chapters long. It is in Chapter 9 that Jesus tells his disciples that they are headed to Jerusalem. 65% of this Gospel is there to talk about Christ’s sacrifice for us in the Holy City. And so when he gets there in today’s Gospel reading, there is a sense that this long journey is over. He’s gotten where he needs to be. But as we hear the Passion read this morning, there is also the sense that Jesus has run out of options and has no place else to go. *End of the road*. He is where he needs to be...to do what he needs to do.

For every one of us that likes our Jesus meek and mild, today is a challenge. For every one of us that likes a comfortable

Christianity, today is a rebuttal. For every one of us that treats the Church like an organization we join, instead of an organ that incorporates us, a living organ that bleeds and sweats for the poor, for the disenfranchised, for the broken, for the hurting, for the hungry, for the homeless, today is a wake up call.

One of the things we talk about in our study of Scripture is that God's Word is not something we read as history, rather it is a gift that makes us a participant in God's actions, in God's grace. So too with the Passion this week. It is as if we are riding into town with Jesus. To share a meal on Thursday and then to stand at the foot of the cross on Friday. To feel and to understand the awesome nature of this gift of God as Jesus comes to the *end of the road*. And it is when we grasp the enormity of this gift that our lives are forever changed.

Our response to God moves from tokens to real commitment;

Our response to God's children moves from detachment and judgment to care and commitment; and

Our understanding of God's grace becomes a reality that guides us each day and opens us up to the wondrous ways that God works.

One of the reasons I love Luke's Gospel so much is that he's always turning things upside down. Mary warned us early in this book. *He will put down the mighty from their seats and exalt those of low degree*. His son the baby is born in a barn. His son the king rides a donkey. His son the savior hangs on a cross. No wonder so many people missed him. And knowing that that is how God continues to work, no wonder so many people miss him today.

And so a "take home" assignment for you, for Holy Week. Be intentional. Look for God this week. Look in all the unexpected places for the love and grace of Christ. And just as importantly, look for all the unexpected opportunities you will have to tell and to show others about this Lord who loves them and

who is willing to die for them. Bottom line is, we're at the *end of the road*. Ride on...ride on.