

## SERMON 836

First Week in Lent

March 12, 2014

936th Week as Priest

762nd Week at St Dunstan's

27th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

## THE JOURNEY

*Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

I have long understood the life that each of us lives through the metaphor or image of the journey. This is especially appropriate for Christians, I believe, because the adult life of Jesus of Nazareth was spent in walking from place to place, telling the Good News of the coming of the Kingdom of God, teaching and healing people, and performing signs and wonders. He walked everywhere he went, and as he took each path, he gathered others to join with him as companions in the way. The early Christians were first called “followers of the Way.” The word ‘companion’ literally means ‘one who shares bread’ as on a journey.

In his last days, our Lord set his face like a flint toward the holy city Jerusalem, and he took this Jerusalem Road with the full knowledge that he would be betrayed by cruel men, arrested, beaten, and put to death. But, just as he told his disciples, he would be raised from death by God the Father on the third day. The journey of Jesus

was necessary and hard, and it was entered into freely and obediently by the Son of God. The journey of Jesus was ‘sure and certain,’ intentional and purposeful; there was nothing haphazard or unnecessary about it. He was never lost. He never wandered off the path, and he did not seek a different way to make the journey. He and the Father were one, every step of the way, though some would say that God the Son was utterly abandoned by God the Father in that horrific execution on the cross. The understanding here is that Jesus had to die alone, apart from any help or communion, in order to be the full, perfect, and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. And so, Jesus made the ultimate journey, and the ultimate sacrifice, for us all.

But we do share in his journey, and this I believe is an important aspect of the Feast of Gregory the Great. Had Pope Gregory not sent Augustine and his monks to England’s shores in the late sixth century, there would be no Anglican Communion today, no Episcopal Church, no St. Dunstan’s in which to worship. Had Augustine not persevered and made the journey after all, he would not have been the first Archbishop of Canterbury—and there would be no Dunstan to follow in his footsteps three centuries later.

The journey is difficult and dangerous at times for us all, and yet each of us is called to join Christ on the Jerusalem Road, to set our faces like flint, and to give our selves—our souls and bodies—to his great purpose. The changes and chances of this life are such that we will never have to make such a sacrifice as we witness in the lives of

the saints and martyrs of the faith, but are—each of us and all of us—called to make a heroic commitment to the Way of Christ. As my old friend Ken Fields used to say, “All God wants from you is a complete, unqualified commitment. That’s all.”

I believe that if we could learn to see our lives in this way—as a journey, a pilgrimage, a path or way to follow our Lord—we would have a greater understanding of the love that God has for each of us, that our lives—your life—truly is of infinite importance to God.

So, let’s use this Season of Lent as a time to follow our Lord on the Jerusalem Road. Let’s do our best to live a life that is worthy of Christ. **AMEN.**