



SERMON 839

Third Sunday in Lent

March 23, 2014

938th Week as Priest

764th Week at St Dunstan's

29th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

ON THE ROAD

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

In this Season of Lent, we are traveling the Jerusalem Road—from the wilderness to the holy city. As we make our way along the road, we realize that there are certain expectations of each pilgrim, each companion in the way. These expectations come to us, not as tedious duties that we must perform, but rather as the natural development of our selves, our souls and bodies, as disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. Our Lord is calling us to something beyond our selves, greater than our selves. He is calling us to follow him on the Jerusalem Road.

Early this morning, he gathered us together and said that we are, each of us, servants, one of the other. And we sang ...

*Won't you let me be your servant,
Let me be as Christ to you,
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant too.*

We are not here to bully or boss. Our leaders don't bark orders, they serve with humility and great kindness in the name of Christ. Our common purpose is not to be right, or to prove ourselves, but to be faithful and patient, helpful and encouraging. We are all works in progress, and God is not through with any of us yet. Some have deeper faith than others; some have wisdom and understanding that all do not possess. But we are traveling together, as a company of the faithful, as travelers on the road.

*We are pilgrims on a journey,
We are travelers on the road,
We are here to help each other,
Walk the mile and bear the load.*

We are engaged in a great effort, a noble duty. We are pilgrims on a journey, and we are together in this task. There is no competition, no desire to be the first to arrive in the holy city. Each of us is completely committed. We make our way together. We arrive all in one place. We follow the Lord, the Messiah, the Prince of Peace. And when the burden becomes too great for any one of us, there are others here to help us, to walk the mile and bear the load.

*I will hold the Christ light for you
In the nighttime of your fear.
I will hold my hand out to you,
Speak the peace you long to hear.*

Some among us are afraid and tentative. They have not yet experienced the power that comes from the Spirit of Christ. But they will, with your help and mine. It is our place to hold the light of Christ before them, to show the path ahead, and if necessary, to lead them by the hand, so they do not stumble or fall.

We must speak gently, softly, and call each other by name. Our words are words of peace. Our hearts are brave and filled with love. We know that the Lord of all hopefulness will not leave us comfortless. We know that he comes quickly to our aid in time of trouble. We know that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us.

*I will weep when you are weeping,
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow,
'Til we've seen the journey through.*

Our journey has already been long and difficult at times. Some are hurt—in body, or mind, or spirit, or soul. Others are sick and suffering. But we abandon no one. Not one person is left behind on the Jerusalem Road. We laugh together, and we weep together. We share our lives with each other. Each person has a story to tell, and we listen patiently, eagerly, hopefully. Some days we travel many miles. On other days, just a few steps. The strong ones encourage us; their laughter and their joy are contagious. They give us hope, and a future.

*When we sing to God in heaven,
We shall find such harmony.
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.*

Our songs of the morning are strong and filled with hope. We sing to God in heaven, and we know that with us sing angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. Our songs of the evening are softer and sadder. They speak of Christ's agony, which we have come to know awaits him in Jerusalem. He has spoken of betrayal, and violence, and we are afraid. He tells us that he will be handed over to cruel men, and we protest. He insists that we must love our enemies, even those who will put him to death. This is heartbreaking for us all. He is so good, so kind, so loving. Our songs praise him. Our tears are for him, and for each other, and for our selves.

*Won't you let me be your servant,
Let me be as Christ to you,
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant too.*

If I could leave the Jerusalem Road, I would do so. I do not want to see him suffer and die. But I can do no other than to follow him. I have no other place to go. And you, dear sisters and brothers, are the same. We find ourselves on the Jerusalem Road. We come to know ourselves along the way. We can no more abandon this path than we can deny that he is the Son of God. He is our life, and our truth, and

our way. God give us strength to follow him. God come quickly to save us from sin and death. **AMEN.**

983 words