

Youth Speaker: Destiny Hoerbelt's Transcript
from May 31, 2024 Episcopal Address

From Cairo, Egypt to Jerusalem, Israel is about a week's journey on foot. Yet it took the Israelites 40 years to complete this journey. The difference in time is not the fault of bad planning or of the large population which that was migrating, or even the extreme terrain they traveled through. Joshua chapter 5 verse 6 says they took 40 years to complete the journey because the Israelites who had fled from Egypt had been disobedient to the Lord and thus would not get to see the promise promised land. When the Israelites tried to dictate their lives for themselves, a 7-day journey took 40 years to complete.

God doesn't tend to make *his* will for us complex. It's easy what the next step is, it's just unclear as to why or what the end looks like. When the light turns green you go, but sometimes we can't see our turn up ahead.

I can attest, through my life I have worked in culinary, education, retail, business; there is no clear connection between where I've been and what I've done. But these connections do not need to be clear to us, only to God. In the Book of Psalms chapter 119 verse 105 it is written "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." We can walk through the darkness, through the fog, and through the confusion if we let God lead us. We need to let God be our headlights, our steering wheel, and our GPS. God connects us in ways we cannot see; but God can see it and to him the connections are clear. God is driving each of us to where we need to be, and I'm sure his driving record is spotless. And his timing is impeccable.

We don't always walk towards what we expect to. If we pray for water, sometimes we will walk into a desert and find an oasis or maybe a mirage. Or perhaps we will find living water beside the well. When Israel prayed for a savior from their Roman oppressors, they expected a military genius to overthrow their captures. Instead, Mary and Joseph were given a path to a manger where a child was born. Wisemen and shepherds were given a star to follow to where that same child lay; a child whose death and resurrection would overthrow tyranny, would overthrow empires, would overthrow death! Imagine if Joseph had grown fearful and felt he knew a better way to Bethlehem. Or if the Wisemen decided it would be better to go left or right? They didn't get to where they needed to be because they were cartographers, they were in the right place at the right time because God would have it no other way.

Now let's be honest here, we don't always want to move in the first place. We would rather stay cozy under the covers with a cup of coffee or cocoa, Jonah was the same way. He knew what God wanted him to do and where he wanted him to go, but Jonah didn't want it for himself. Hence why he ran in the opposite direction, and hence why it took a fish to get him to Nineveh. Frankly I don't know of a more obvious way to say I want you HERE than that. We may not want the change we are given, but I have yet to hear about a suggestion box for God. So, until then his will shall push us past our boundaries and force us to lean on him for courage and guidance.

Thus as we continue forward as a conference, congregations and servant leaders and as individuals let us not forget to follow to be following God rather than trying to surpass God. That is, the same God our forefathers praised, the way maker. For it is the same God who created a path for the Israelites to escape from Egypt, which made way for Mary and Joseph to the manger in Bethlehem, and that led the journey for Jesus to the cross! But this was not the end, only the beginning allowing an empty tomb to be brought to light! Where we are meant to be won't change; how long it takes us to get there depends on our willingness to let God lead and for us to follow him.

Looking to the future of the United Methodist Church in NY my hope is to come together. Work in unison as we share joyful news, that there is an empty tomb, its former occupant it's leading us to salvation.