

CHANGING WAYS

For the past seven years I often found myself driving toward Ancaster, usually twice a week. The purpose for my trips there had to do with taking my daughter to her basketball practices. Which school gym we were practicing at would determine if I took the back roads or jumped onto the highway instead. Usually, it would take us 25-30 minutes to get there and the same on the return trip. Time and cost-wise, these trips were not too bad over the years.

Starting this past September, I have found myself driving in a completely opposite direction. My daughter started her first year of university this fall and is attending Huron University in London. Instead of travelling east towards Ancaster, I find myself driving west towards London. I do not mind the drive, but it does take a lot longer to do than our drives to Ancaster did. On days when there are no snow or accidents on the highway, I can make the trip in about 65-70 minutes. (That is with a little speeding on my part, of course).

On a recent trip when the weather was bad it took me nearly two hours to drop my daughter off at university. The time involved in making my way to London and back is naturally longer, but it is costlier as well. There is the extra gas that is required for this longer trip, but an additional cost results from my need for a large double-double coffee from Tims on the way there, and on the return trip too. My daughter finishes her exams on Wednesday of this week so I will be making the trip down afterward to bring her back home for the Christmas holidays. Come January I will be back again to making my way to London on a frequent basis.

As I reflected upon this change in the way that I have been driving since September, it got me thinking about the ways people were journeying in biblical times in respect to their relationship with God. While I was researching a sermon this past week, I was reminded how only 20 percent of the kings of Israel and Judah chose to rule in a way that showed they were following God. I knew of this tendency by many of these kings beforehand, but I was shocked when I stumbled upon this percentage.

Unfortunately, in those times, most of the people followed in the same way with respect to their relationship with God as their kings did. Even in the Gospels we see many examples of people travelling in a direction away from Jesus. One such example is of the rich young man who approached Jesus asking what he must do in order to inherit eternal life. When Jesus shared with him what he had

to do, the rich young man turned and walked away very sad, not wanting to let go of his possessions which was the most important thing to him.

The story of the prodigal son is another example of someone who decided to walk in a direction away from his father for a time thinking it would bring him more happiness in life. It was only when he hit rock bottom that he turned direction and made his way back toward having a relationship with his father. Both of these examples show the lack of joy one has if they choose to walk in a direction away from the Lord.

One story that we focus on during the Christmas season that shows us the joy we experience when we do journey in ways leading toward our Saviour is the one I made mention of in the mid-week message last week. I made reference to the shepherds making their way to Bethlehem to see the child for themselves that the angel spoke to them about. After sharing with Mary and the others everything the angels had told them we are told:

The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen. (Luke 2:19)

It was not only the shepherds who experienced joy when they made their way to see Jesus. Matthew shared in his gospel how the wisemen did as well. These familiar stories serve as a reminder to us of the joy we experience when we consistently choose to travel in a way that brings us closer to our Lord. It is not a consistent choice as we discover in scripture for people to travel in a way that brings them closer to our Saviour. We learned in Old Testament times only 20 percent of the kings of Israel and Judah made the choice to live in a way that brought them closer to God.

As Christmas approaches it would be good for us to look closely at which way we are travelling right now in our relationship with Christ. If we are only travelling in a way that brings us closer to Him 20 percent of the time, then we are missing out on experiencing joy in the other 80 percent of the time in our lives. Let's take this season to ensure we are making it a consistency in our life to journey each day in a way that brings us closer to Jesus.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean