

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – May 11, 2020

The Lord be with you.

Oh, to boldly go where no man has gone before.

I used to thrill to the sound of the opening of Star Trek, and the mission entrusted to the Starship Enterprise, to boldly go where no one has gone before.

I've been thinking of that in this time of a worldwide pandemic. As we are going... I'm not sure how boldly, but we are going where no one really has gone before. We're traveling uncharted territory. It feels like at 100 miles an hour.

And for the first time in my life I really can't plan ahead very far.

We don't know what the next weeks and months will bring. I chuckle at an old cartoon I saw where Adam and Eve being driven out of a garden and Adam says to Eve we're living through a time of great change.

What do you do when everything feels so uncertain? What, what do you do when it feels like you're driving in a fog on a mountain highway?

I've often times said that Abraham is my patron saint, as Hebrews 11:8 says of Abraham, that he set out not knowing where he was going...

I've really come to appreciate what Martin Luther King said, Faith is taking the next step when you don't see the whole staircase.

So today I'm coming back to an old testament passage. It helps me a lot and going where I've never gone before, I'm looking at Joshua chapter 3, verse one, In the early morning Joshua rose and set up from Satin with all the Israelites, and they came to the Jordan and they camped there before a crossing over at the end of three days, the officers went through the camp and commanded the people. When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, being carried by the levitical priest, then you shall set out from your place follow it, so that you may know the way you should go for, you have not passed this way before.

Here's the situation it is a time of momentous change and uncertainty. The people of God are coming to the end of a 40-year-long Exodus journey, and they stand on the banks of the Jordan River that is swollen at the flood stage and they are commanded to cross over it, and in just one day, everything about their lives is going to change, no more will they eat God's manna from heaven, no more will the shikinah glory cloud shine over them to lead them. For forty years, it's been pretty much the same routine, every day, and now all of that is changing as they are going to pass over into the promised land, that is a land of God's promise, but it is also a land where there are great walled cities and mighty armies to oppose them.

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And I think the last phrase of this passage pretty well sums up the situation. You have not passed this way before.

And so the Lord instructs His people, He says, when you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the levitical priest, then you shall set out from your place follow it, that is the Ark of the Covenant.

Follow it, so that you may know the way you should go.

How were they to know the way they should go?

God will show them, they are to follow the arc of the covenant. Now, for the ancient Israelites the Ark of the Covenant is the visible manifestation the visible expression of God's presence on Earth with His people. The Ark is God's sign that he is with his people, he's got their back, he's got their side, he's got their front, it is called the Ark of the Covenant, because it represents God's covenant with His people.

I will be your God and you will be my people. And so, they are to keep their eyes on and there to follow the Ark of the Covenant.

That's something interesting is happening here because for 40 years in the wilderness, God had led his people by the shikinah glory cloud that was over them. When it moved, they were to move, when it stopped, they were to stop. But now, all of that is changing, it is the ark of the covenant, it is the ark of God's presence with them, that will lead them where they have not gone before.

Notice here that what in the Old Testament is outward and physical, in the New Testament is inward and spiritual so that when we come to the New Testament, Jesus is the true ark of God's presence with his people, Jesus is Immanuel, he is a manifestation of God with us and Jesus says, "Keep your eyes on me, follow me. In the book of Joshua, God's people were to keep their eyes on the Ark of the Covenant, and follow it where it went. You and I are to keep our eyes on Jesus and follow Jesus where we have never gone before.

I don't know how to plan for the next day or the next week, but I do know that today, I want to get close to Jesus.

In 1980 John Lennon, was murdered outside his apartment building and that year John Lennon had written a song called Beautiful Boy, it was a song about his little son and his love for Him and there's a much quoted line from that song that I've come to really love. It says before you cross the street take my hand before you crossed the street, take my hand, Life is what happens while you're making other plans.

We do not know what our plans will come to. We do not know what the next weeks and months will bring. But Jesus is saying, "Take my hand. In 1997. I was on a mission trip to India, it was a far Northeastern part of India where there was a rebel movement to succeed from India, and there was a lot of guerilla activity that was going on and I remember one night coming back to our, to our hotel and to find the hotel, surrounded by

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troops. We felt ourselves in some danger as a movement from village to village could be dangerous. The next day, along with some Indian nationals, we were going to a village to hold an open air meeting, and we had a guide. But I wanna tell you, this guide did not give us a map to tell us where to go. This guide did not write out directions for us to follow our guide did something better. Our guide simply said to us, follow me.

Before you cross the street. Take my hand, Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans. I've lived a lot of years and I have found true what David found to be too many years ago.

The Lord is my shepherd. There's nothing I shall want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul, He leads me in right paths for his name sake.

I am Tim Smith a fewllow traveler on the pilgrim way. Thanks for listening, until next time...

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