

## **“You Show Me”**

Rev. Greg Watling

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Sunday, April 23, 2023

Texts: Psalm 16 and Luke 24: 13-35

Ralph Waldo Emerson once coined the phrase, “Life is a journey, not a destination.” I think that many of us believe it is true, except we often spend a lot of time worrying about our destination so much so that we miss the journey. We also miss who guides us along the journey in ways seen and unseen.

Our scriptures today are about journeys: one being the familiar story of the Emmaus Road from Luke’s Gospel that tells the story of people traveling with Jesus after the resurrection and not even knowing he was there. I spoke to you about that a couple weeks ago. The other, much less familiar, is from Psalm 16. I’d like to spend our time there today as much is being said that many of us may have never heard.

“The author of the Psalm begins with a brief petition for the protection of God, asking that “the keeper of Israel” watch over his life. The petition is supported by a motive clause, a declaration that the psalmist has made the Lord his refuge. “In you I take refuge” is a formula for trusting one’s life to the care of God. The rest of the prayer is an exposition of that trust. The psalm teaches that trust is not merely a warm feeling or a passing impulse in a time of trouble; it is a structure of acts and experiences that

open one's consciousness to the Lord as the supreme reality of life," says James Mays in his commentary on this psalm (*Interpretation Bible Commentary*, p86).

Who do you trust for your journey? Do you trust that life is a journey? What exactly is a journey? In my mind, a journey is not likely linear. It doesn't go from point A to point B. Maybe some journeys do, but to be a true journey, the person on the path has to be willing to be moved and shaped by the experiences of life and the activities around them. There is an openness to the unplanned, the seemingly unproductive, and maybe even the downright unpleasant. Journeys necessarily lead to places we could not have imagined when we left "home". Journeys bring us in conversation and community with people we never would have imagined along our way.

Just yesterday, at Rod Anderson's funeral, a lady introduced herself to me and told me that she was a long time friend of Rod and Sallie. Further, she told me that her sister lived in Owosso. Did I know Joyce Bruder? Of course I did. Her kids were similar in age to me and we grew up in the same church. More than that, Joyce's husband, Dick, was often a part of our youth activities. It gets better: this woman (whose name I'm sorry I forget) knew my mother and they used to go on trips together up to Vanderbilt when the UCC owned a camp up there when I was a kid. My journey changed as I reconnected to my own past through an event in someone else's life. There are hundreds of examples of things that happen that are surprising, or that happen along the way, but impact us in ways we don't always understand.

The question the psalmist asks is whom do we trust for this journey? For the author, it is God. "Trust is confidence of life in the face of death (vv 9-11). All three dimensions of the psalmist's being – heart, soul, and body – participate in this joyous security" (Mays, p87). Do we trust...do we have confidence that God is participating in our journey? Do we believe...do we honestly understand that God is active in our lives even when we can't see it, even when we don't understand it, even when our journey seems derailed, delayed, or downright denied? In whom, or in what, do we trust? For some, it's in our money, our intellect, our history, our social location, our...something. But even our money invites us to trust in God. Mays continues, "The exuberance of [the psalmist's] confidence arises from the knowledge that the Lord will not surrender his faithful one to Sheol and the Pit, the realm of death. Death in the thought world of the psalms is not only the polar opposite of life, the loss of one's own vital existence. It is also the loss of the presence of God and the pleasures of that presence...When God's providence keeps the faithful in the path of life, they receive far more than continued existence." In other words, we can trust that God will not abandon us, even though our journeys can lead through some terrible, lonely and hurtful places.

While the whole world may reject and ignore us, we can rely on the fact that "nothing can separate us from the love of God" just like Paul says in Romans 8. It is God who continues to abide. It is God who never lets us go. It is God who never fails, even when it seems like everything around us fails. It is God who makes a way we can't

seem to find a way. To make those statements relies on faith that ultimately God is our trust. We can take refuge in God who will show us the way even when the way is unclear or even just plain incomprehensible.

“The Lord has made known the path of life.” I don’t know, sometimes I feel like the Lord is the only one who knows. I’m not clear. I don’t get it. I feel lost sometimes, alone other times, and just plain confused more than I care to tell you. But the point of the psalm is not that we have to know the path of life. We don’t need to know everything about the journey. Our task is to continue to build our trust in the one who does. To trust God enough that God knows the path of our journey and will show us the way forward when we’re ready and able to hear. In the meantime, God will be our refuge, our hope, our ever-present source of life. God will not abandon us. God will not forsake us.

Instead, God will show us if we will but trust in the promise and remain open to the possibility.

“The Lord is my refuge...” says the psalmist. May we now or one day be able to confidently proclaim the same.

In the many blessed names of God. Amen.