

Pentecost B, 2012

Text: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Title: Guide for the Journey

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Your life is a journey, a walk down a path, traveling down the road. Even when it seems like nothing is happening, even when it seems like life is standing still and everything has ground to a halt, you're still moving forward. Sometimes you need to look backwards to truly appreciate how far you've come.

God the Father has laid out the path for you. His law shows you how to walk His way, how to live your life. There are many different possible paths to take. You are free to choose where to go and what to do.

Whenever we go anywhere in a car these days we start by strapping the kids in their car seats. They are forced to go where we take them. They can't get out. They're stuck. They can scream and cry and whine all they want, but like it or not, they're going where we take them.

Your life is not like this. God doesn't strap you down and say, "Okay, you're coming with me, like it or not." You can choose to get out of the car at any time. You can go your own way.

But that's usually a mistake. God has laid out a good path for you. It may not seem like. It may not always seem the best road. It may be rocky and have its twists and turns, but it avoids the real dangers and takes you where you need to go.

Now there have been times when you've gone off track. There have been times when you've gone your own way. It's called trespassing. Going where you shouldn't.

But God keeps calling you to get back on track, to come back to the road, to repent. Repent means to turn around and get back on track, to change direction. To repent doesn't just mean to look back on the road you should have taken and keep going.

Have you ever missed an exit or gotten off on the wrong road? If you know the area you might be able to just keep going and find another way, but if you don't, if it's a strange town you've never been to before, you need to actually turn around and go back.

Too often when we sin, we realize that we're going the wrong way. We know we've missed our exit or taken a wrong turn, but we just keep going stubbornly forward. Rather than turn around and go back we just keep sinning.

Repentance is more than just admitting that you're going the wrong way, but stopping, turning around and getting back on track.

If you ever wonder which is the right way to go, look to Jesus. He is the forerunner, the pioneer, the one who has already walked the road. Jesus walked your road in more ways than one. First, physically Jesus was conceived, born, lived and died. He went through the whole human life cycle from embryo all the way through his death. Everything that you go through as a human being, Jesus has gone through. All the temptations. All the joys. All the stress. All the disappointments. All the pain. All the suffering. Jesus has been through it all for you.

But that wasn't all. Jesus didn't just go through this earthly life. Jesus' life didn't end with his death on the cross. Jesus's road went through death to life and even to God the Father's right hand and glory.

All other roads lead only to death, and end there. All other roads are dead ends. God's way does lead to death, but it keeps going through death to everlasting life.

In our Old Testament reading we see this most clearly. The people of Israel went their own way. They followed other gods. They followed their military allies. They followed what their heart told them was right. They chose their own path.

And where did it lead? Death, destruction, and exile. The Israelites were led away from their homes to a foreign land. Babylon.

Ezekiel sees this valley of dry bones, and it's just like the nation of Israel in exile. Dead and hopeless.

What's the only thing that can bring them back to life? What's the only thing that can set them back on the right path? They can't do it themselves. They're dead. Only the Holy Spirit can. Only the Holy Spirit can bring them back to life. Only the Holy Spirit can lead them home. God says to them, "Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel."

The only way they're coming back home is if the Lord leads them home.

And it's the same way with you. As hard as you try, you can't stay on the right track, the right path. You keep veering off to the side, following your eyes and your heart and your own desires.

The only way for you to get back on track and stay on track is through the Holy Spirit. Jesus told his disciples, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth."

The Holy Spirit is your divine guide through life. If you listen to Him, He will lead you along the right path.

Now this doesn't mean just sitting there and waiting to hear voices from heaven, waiting for the Holy Spirit to speak to you out of the blue. That's not likely to happen, and if it does, it's usually just your heart telling you what you want to hear.

Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will take God's words, which are also Jesus' words and declare them to the disciples. In the words of God, both Old and New Testament, we have God's Word, we have Jesus' word, we hear the Holy Spirit.

If you want to hear the Holy Spirit, if you want to find direction in your life, come to the Divine Service and to Bible Class. Crack open your Bible to meditate on God's word. Speak about God's Word with your fellow travelers. You're not in this alone.

The world may think you're crazy. Remember how they thought the disciples were drunk? Eventually they were threatened with death and most of them were killed.

But they knew that death would not be the end for them. Death was not the end for Jesus and so it was not the end for them. They knew that if they followed Jesus even to death, that they would be led by the Holy Spirit to live everlasting. The same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead would raise them, too.

And you, too. The journey won't be easy, and you'll probably die along the way, but death will not be the end of your journey, either.

God the Father has laid out this path for you. Jesus Christ has shown you the way. And now Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to guide you every step of the way.