

“Looking for God at the Crossroads”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for 1st UMC, Grand Junction, Sunday, July 14, 2024

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ website or by clicking this link and finding the date of the worship service in which it appears:

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Scripture Text: Luke 14:28-30 [NLT]

(with reference to the narrative re: Moses and the scouts in Numbers 13-14)

OPENING

Crossroads are rarely benign; they place us in a bind. The bind is that we have to make a choice, and one eliminates the other as a possibility – at least for the moment. And that is often anxiety-producing because we are afflicted with “FOMO”: the Fear Of Missing Out!

But the stakes are often higher than anxiety and FOMO. Crossroads often present us with risks. Most of the time, making the choice at a crossroads involves stepping into the unknown: the full pathway isn’t clear, the end-game uncertain. Sometimes the risks are small, and sometimes they are accompanied by significant consequences – both life-enhancing and life-threatening.

SERMON THOUGHTS

As people of faith, we often experience a crossroads as a place of discernment concerning the will of God.



What would God have us do at this juncture? How does the crossroads represent the potential for both faithful response and blessing AND the disappointment of a missed opportunity, what may be referred to as “discipleship denied”?

What’s even more anxiety-producing is the question of the point of no return. That is, does the window of opportunity ever close and lock? Said another way, is there ever a point where our inability or unwillingness to make a choice makes the choice for us?

Do these times fill you with anxiety? Or are they exciting for you? Do they evoke hope in you, with thoughts of unanticipated possibility? Do they evoke dread? Probably all of the above, if we’re honest.

The Scriptures can sometimes provide clear direction for us, but more often they provide something *more valuable*: A framework for discerning a disciple’s response to the choices we face in life. That is, they create *the environment* for us to exercise our faith:

the seeking hard after God in prayer and intentionality through which we experience the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the present situation.

TO THE SCRIPTURES – Lessons for Today

In terms of our Christian discipleship at a crossroads, I was wrestling this past week with two Biblical passages that serve as **bookends** for our response, especially where we feel God calling us to do something significant for Him at a crossroads.

- Luke 14 (from today) – Counting the cost
- Numbers 13 and 14 – Moses and the scouts: There comes a time when a response is too late; we miss the window of opportunity.
- As “bookends”, these present opposing points of view, i.e., neither one of these provides “God’s direction” for any given situation we may face. The value here is in what I referred to earlier as *a Scriptural framework* within which we discern God’s direction for us in the complexity of our lives at the moment. These must be held in tension, with us seeking the presence of the Holy Spirit to help us respond faithfully as a follower of Christ – a disciple – at the crossroads we face.

CONCLUSION

Lest we leave despairing of what we recall in our lives as moments of “discipleship denied”, the good news is that God does His best work in graveyards, right?

That is, when we think we have totally made the wrong choice at a crossroads, God has a way of working redemptively in the ashes of our messes. From Ezekiel’s Valley of Dry Bones to the empty tomb outside of Golgotha, God is a master of working in every situation for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes in their lives (Romans 8:28).

This isn’t a word to help us live indifferently as disciples of Jesus but to help us live with hope as we make difficult choices that have real impact and consequence for us and for those we care about and share life with.

Let us pray...