

The Road Less Traveled – November 17, 2017

A commitment can be a scary thing. By its very nature, it is an act of faith, and that means a commitment is shrouded in uncertainty. And most of us don't like uncertainty. I can still remember one Saturday evening in late March 1992. I was locked in a small room in The United Methodist Church in Eagle Lake, TX. All dressed up, I waited with my best friend and my Dad for someone to come and tell me we were ready. Ready for what exactly I really wasn't sure. I knew what was about to happen in the next half-hour. We had practiced where to stand, what to say and when to say it. That part was clear enough. It's what came after that had me scared to death.

I knew what was expected of me during the coming half-hour. I was going to take a vow, make a promise to God, to share the rest of my life with a woman I loved more than anything else in the world. That no matter what the future held, no matter what might happen, in struggle and in plenty, in sickness and in health, that I would love, honor and keep her. And I would do so until the day that death parted us. The what was easy enough to understand, and I was on board. It was the how with which I struggled. How could I make that vow without any idea of what the future held? Whether we would be successful in our careers or struggle financially. Whether we would be able to have kids, or not. Whether we would be healthy, or struggle with illness. I don't like uncertainty, and the only thing that seemed to be in front of me was uncertainty. I was about to make the most important promise of my life, and I had no idea what life held in store the next day, much less the next 50 years.

Over the next few minutes I got a hold of myself. And over the next half-hour I took the vow, I made the promise. And it is a decision that has made one of the biggest differences in my life. Because when I took that vow, when I made that commitment, I communicated to Melissa – and to God – just how important she and our life together was to me. Without any guarantee, without any promise of success, without any clue how our lives would unfold, I said yes. Because she was the one and only one with whom I wanted to do life, regardless of what it might look like. And that promise – that simple statement of commitment – formed the soil that has nurtured and deepened our passion for each other and our life together for more than 25 years.

That's the power of commitment.

And that's why we will do something very important, something very powerful, on Sunday. For the past few weeks we've been talking about the vows that we affirmed when we joined Aledo UMC. That we would support this body of Christ through our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness. And we've talked about those commitments as the foundation, the soil, that nurtures and grows our vision of *Cultivating a Passion for Christ*. That in making those vows, we proclaim that this is the community of faith with which we will do life. That this is the family that we will nurture and support and that will nurture and

support us. That this is the place where our faith in God and our walk with Christ will become real, transcending the walls of the church. The commitment we made didn't presuppose any particular future or chain of events. We simply said yes, without any promise of success, without any clue as to how our lives together would unfold.

On Sunday, we will come together and reaffirm that commitment and ask God to bless our future together. A couple of weeks ago you should have received a pledge card in the mail. If you did not receive one, you can pick up one at church on Sunday. On that pledge card is an opportunity to articulate how you will move into 2018 authentically living out the commitments that we share. It is an invitation to reaffirm your "yes" to support this corner of God's Kingdom with your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. How you actually live out those commitments will be different for every person. But our continued journey together begins with the commitment itself.

That's why it is not only my prayer, but it is my expectation, that every single family that calls Aledo UMC home will make that commitment. That every family will use that card to affirm our future together as a family that *Cultivates a Passion for Christ*. That together we will lay our commitments on the altar and ask God to bless the promise and hope that they represent.

Real relationships – relationships that endure, deepen and bear fruit – they all begin with a commitment. Ours is no different.

See you Sunday.