

The Road Less Traveled – March 3, 2017

I recently bought a new tablet to replace my aging Ipad. Since this tablet was new with a lot of available space, I was browsing some of the most popular apps available. I ran across one that really caught my attention. It really wasn't for my tablet; it's designed for a smart phone, but it popped up on the most popular list.

It's called On Second Thought. It is a messaging app that lets you recall text and instant messaging messages after you've sent them. In the promotional write-up it says, "Mistakes happen, and On Second Thought is here to help you fix them. Take control over your communication with the first messaging app that lets you recall text messages before they get to the recipient's phone. Know you are going out for the night and might have a few too many drinks? Set the curfew, and your messages will be embargoed until the next morning. When the curfew expires, you can decide which messages you actually want to send. Whether it was an accidental click or auto-correct made you look like a jerk, it happens and On Second Thought has you covered."

And I could not help but shake my head and think what a sad commentary on our culture. I mean the reason the app exists is to protect us from ourselves. To protect us from our impulsiveness to fire off a text in anger, to say things in a text that we would never say face to face or even over the phone.

But I think it says something else about us, as well. Something that gives me hope. I think it says that if we take the time to really consider who we are and what our actions say about us, if we really look at our decisions in the light of day, through a fresh set of eyes, we will find a better version of ourselves. That that time and perspective, it makes a difference.

That's what this journey of Lent is really about – time and perspective. In these 40 days we will prepare ourselves. Not just to celebrate Easter again, but more so to step into the story once again. Because it's our story. Jesus didn't die for this congregation or the United Methodist Church; Jesus died for you. For each one of us. And we can't celebrate the empty tomb on Easter Sunday without first considering fully how and why he got there in the first place. And so we will spend this time, these 40 days, in prayer. In reflection. Looking inward and upward. Some of us will give up something, hopefully to spend more time in prayer or devotion. Some of us may take on a spiritual discipline, again, to draw closer to God.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus begins his ministry by calling the faithful to repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven had come near. And traditionally we associate repentance with changing our ways, confessing where we have fallen short and then promising to do better, with turning around and heading back to God. And there is nothing wrong with that, but the idea falls short of what Jesus is actually saying. The word here, in the Greek, is *metanoia*. And it means more than to do better. It means to be changed. It means to be transformed. It is from this word that our English word metamorphosis comes. And there is at its root this assumption of imagination. That we can't really change until we can imagine the change. And we can't imagine the change, the transformation, until we can see ourselves as God sees us, and as God dreams of us being. It's the promise that we will change not because we think we need to, but rather because we long to.

That promise lies at the heart of the Lenten season. Not an invitation to hopefully create some better version of ourselves because we think it is somehow more godly. But to invite God to show us what we can be, to begin to see ourselves and the world as God longs for it to be. Because that is where real transformation begins.

And that, my friends, that is a journey.

See you Sunday.