

The Road Less Traveled – April 21, 2017

It's a phenomenon that I have never fully understood – the post-Easter slump. Traditionally the Sunday after Easter is one of the lowest attended Sundays in the church year. Scores of pastors take the Sunday off, so many that the Sunday after Easter is affectionately dubbed National Associates Sunday. And they don't take off because they are still tired from Easter. They take off because they don't want to preach to a half-empty Sanctuary.

And I've never understood it. In the aftermath of Easter, I am excited. God has just revealed again the mystery of the Empty Tomb. We have just been reminded of just how deep the Father's love is for us. The truth that there was literally nothing God did not do to demonstrate that love hits hard. And at the end of the Easter story, we are encouraged – challenged really – to make that love real. To live as people loved that much by their creator. I leave Easter inspired, emboldened and encouraged to recommit myself to the life of discipleship that Jesus offers.

After the excitement of Easter, I can't wait to worship again. I am anxious to step out on the journey with Jesus again.

And I hope you are, too. I can't explain the phenomenon of the post-Easter slump, I just know that it happens. But I also am convinced that it doesn't have to. On Easter we explored together the underlying message of the Empty Tomb. We talked about why the women were afraid, why they saw only the Empty Tomb and not the miracle that was right in front of them. And we talked about why Mark told his story that way – namely to remind us to be attentive, to live in anxious expectation of God moving and working in our lives. There is a promise of presence there, and we tend to see what we expect to see. As followers of a risen Lord, we should expect to see Christ at work in our midst. We should expect to hear the call to step into the holy work that God is blessing.

In other words, this is not a time to slack off. This is a time to dig in. This is time to fully commit ourselves to the journey of faith that begins anew at that Empty Tomb. The truth is we can't afford a post-Easter slump. There's too much to do.

- On Sunday, we will honor and celebrate along with our Confirmands and their families a huge step in their personal faith journeys. Confirmation represents these students' "yes" to the grace, love and Lordship of Jesus Christ that their parents claimed for them at their baptisms. In saying yes to Christ, these students not only claim that faith for themselves, they also become full professing members of this faith family. We will confirm these students at the 11 a.m. service on Sunday, and I encourage you to be there. Whenever we baptize a baby, we as a congregation vow to do everything in our power to lead, guide and nurture them in the faith until they are ready to claim it for themselves. We have lived out those vows, and Sunday represents the fruit of that work. I pray each person who calls Aledo UMC home will be there to walk these last steps.
- On May 6 we will come together with churches from all over Parker County for Give One Day. If you are not familiar with Give One Day, it is exactly what it sounds like. It is a single day when we come together as people of faith to be the hands, feet and presence of Christ to those in need. There is much work to do, and work that fits just about any skill set. It is one day that can make a world of difference to someone desperately looking for hope. To be a part of it, visit www.giveoneday.co.
- Our Core Leadership Team for the *As For Me & My House* visioning project is wrapping up its work. I hope you will continue to be in prayer for this remarkable group of people who have worked tirelessly over the past seven months to help us discern who and where God is calling us for the

future. This project is nearing its completion, and the Leadership Team will make its report to Church Council and then to the congregation at large in short order. Then we will come together as a church family on June 4 – that's Pentecost Sunday – to ask God to bless our vision for the future. Then the real work begins.

- And finally, as we move into the summer, opportunities to serve abound. There's Camp Hope in June, Vacation Bible School in July, Junior High and Senior High mission trips, etc. Watch your enews or check out the Connection Center before or after worship to explore where God may be calling you to serve.

All that is to say – and it bears repeating – this is not time for slacking. This is the time to dig in and to walk faithfully and passionately the path that leads away from the Empty Tomb. That's what it means to live as the people of Easter.

See you Sunday.