

The Road Less Traveled – May 10, 2019

A couple of weeks ago I heard a story on the radio that disturbed me greatly. The story profiled a company called *Fake A Vacation*. The Nebraska-based company will, for around \$20, superimpose pictures of you and your family against backdrops from popular vacation destinations like Hawaii or the Grand Canyon. Why? So you can have vacation photos to post on your social media accounts – like everyone else – without actually having to travel.

I thought surely it was a joke until the story went on to report that a recent survey of 4,000 people by the travel website Jetcost revealed that around 10 percent of those surveyed admitted to posting fake travel photos on the Internet.

My first reaction was disbelief. Why in the world would someone post fake travel pictures on social media, much less pay for the privilege? Surely these are sad, lonely people with serious issues that we are talking about. But the more I think about it, the more I am convinced it is simply another symptom of something serious that plagues us as a culture.

We want to be perfect.

Or at least we want to appear perfect. And social media gives us the perfect platform on which to display our perfection. We can post pictures of our smiling families, our overachieving kids, our perfectly coiffed lawns and our impressive houses. We can be the envy of all of our online “friends” and followers, displaying for the world the life that everyone wants.

The problem is that oftentimes it isn’t true. The truth is we all struggle. We all go through dark periods in our lives. Our kids aren’t always perfect. Sometimes the lawn has more weeds than grass. And sometimes we are struggling just to get from one day to the next. And sometimes we can’t afford to take the fabulous vacation.

But God forbid we admit that to the world.

But we need to. We aren’t perfect. We aren’t likely to become perfect. We do struggle sometimes. And the reality is that oftentimes we are better and stronger because of that struggle. And more to the point, God doesn’t call us to be perfect.

What God calls us to is a journey toward perfection.

That was a hallmark of John Wesley’s theology, and it still permeates the United Methodist Church today. Wesley believed that we are all called to move toward being perfected in love. That the reason that we continue to pray, to study Scripture, to worship, to engage in mission and charity and to engage in the Sacraments, is that by doing so we allow God to continue to work on and in us. We learn, we grow, and we deepen our relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. And Wesley believed that as we grow, it is possible to reach a point – maybe just an instant – where we see and react to others and the world around us in the very way that Jesus would.

That is being perfected in love.

That is why we do this. That is why this journey is important. That is why this family is important. Vacation photos – real or fake – come and go. But this journey of faith that we are on together is real. It matters. It is eternal.

See you Sunday.