

A Tool for the Journey of Life

Luke 9:28-36

Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

The great Canadian philosopher Tom Cochran once said,

"Life is a highway"

And suggested that he would like to *"drive it all night long"*

In a similar vein, the American philosopher Bob Dylan once asked,

"How many roads must a man walk down?"

Being a spiritual man, he felt the answer must be *"blowing in the wind"*

Neither of these gentlemen were the first to see life as a real trip

The second book of the Bible is called *"the journey out"* – the *ex – hodos*

The early Christians were called *"followers of the way"* (Acts 9:2, 19:23)

Moses and Elijah meet on the mountain to discuss Jesus' "journey to Jerusalem"

And his "exodus" from this world,

How he will lead his followers out of spiritual Egypt

And into the Promised Land.

The Christian Life could be seen as a Highway

But if it is a highway, how do we get on it?

Who's driving?

And are we ready to be on it *"all night long"*?

I. The Christian Life Begins With Death

It's a counterintuitive Christian truth that

Life on the Christian highway begins with a fatal crash

You need to die before you can ride

A. Crucifixion was the Beginning

This was hard even for Jesus' disciples to accept

They thought the Transfiguration was the beginning

Now they were really going to RIDE!

This was the Jesus they'd been waiting for

But in fact the Transfiguration was a sneak peak at the end of the trip
Heaven's Highway would pass first through Jerusalem,
With floggings, betrayals, and a cross

A FATAL COLLISION between the thinking of the world
And the thinking of God

B. We Are Crucified in Baptism

And so it is with all of us
Recall the words of Paul in Romans 6:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were
baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death,
in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we
too might walk in newness of life.”

Note Paul's turn of phrase:

“We too might walk in newness of life.”
THEM'S TRAVELIN' WORDS!
The trip starts at the death of Holy Baptism

C. Sophia, Too Will Be Crucified

I'm not ashamed to say that I've brought this precious little girl,
Sophia Emily Jane, to this place
that God might kill her

Because to get on the highway of life,
She, too, has to die
So that God might give her a new holy life in Jesus' name

II. The Christian Life Continues With A New Way

Now she'll be on the highway of life with the whole Church on earth
Walking with us in communion with our Lord

And that life will not always be a picnic.
Satan will do his best to pry her from Jesus' hands
Sin will do its best to keep her from obedience to her Lord
The World will do its best to fill her mind
With every unholy and horrid thought it can
By any means available

On this journey to transfiguration,
To rising again to new life,
She will need to die every day
And be raised again by God

A. Luther Wrote About the New Way

Martin Luther fell asleep in the Lord 461 years ago today.
I would say “died,” but he died many years before.
He died at his baptism,
And rose by God’s spirit to drive the highway of the Lord.

Luther recognized the fatal car crash of baptism
As the beginning and ending of the Christian life.
When asked what the result of Baptism should be, he wrote:

“The Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance drown and die with all sins and evil desires, and a new man should daily emerge and live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” (Small Catechism, Baptism, IV)

While the word “walk” or “travel” isn’t used here,
Luther does see Baptism as a WAY
A WAY of life,
Not just the beginning of the journey,
But the GUIDE for the journey, and
HOPE for the journey

B. All the Baptized Travel This Highway

Baptism, then, isn’t an END but a BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY
And no one starts a trip without intending to complete it

Any one – baby, child, teen or adult –
Who wants baptism
Without the Christian journey
Misunderstands the point

They’re a little like Peter, James, and John,
Who’d rather stay on the mountaintop forever
Than descend and follow their Lord to Mt. Calvary and Crucifixion
They’d like to build a little tent around the font
And camp out here in the chancel,
Like Baptism’s not the beginning of the road but the end

But the cloud disappears, the voice from heaven falls silent,
And all we hear is the call to follow Jesus down the mountain
Carrying the promise of the font down life’s highway
Around the curves and down the valleys and up the hills

Called to listen to Jesus, to do what he says,
no matter what the cost or consequences
unafraid of persecution or suffering or even death

Because we've been to the mountain,
Heard the words of God:
"I baptized you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"
Felt the splash of the water,
And now are ready for whatever might come.

Conclusion

For the Christian, life is more of a hard hike up the mountain trail
Than a highway
And the answers to life's questions aren't blowing in the Wind,
But breathed into a sacred book by the Spirit of God himself

A professor of mine once said Christians are like salmon;
They spend their life swimming upstream and then they die

And if that's the case, I'll gladly swim upstream with Jesus and die
Knowing the transfiguration and new life that awaits
Knowing that the promises of baptism stand firm
Knowing that no Christian gets to stay on the mountain forever.

"Glimpsed and gone the revelation/ we shall keep baptismal truth
Not by building on this mountain / Any shrine or sacred booth

But by following the Savior / through the valley to the cross
And by testing faith's resilience / through betrayal, pain and loss

Till we seek no other glory / Than what lies past Cal'vrys hill
And our living and our dying / Then transfigured by Your will."

Amen.