

The Rev. Joan M. Kilian

Trinity Episcopal Church

Isaiah 52: 13 – 53:12  
Hebrews 10: 16 – 25Psalm 22  
John 18: 1 – 19: 42

(Community Worship theme: Mark 15: 21 – 41 Living into the Journey)

-----

**“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way.”**

Well, that about says it, doesn't it? Isaiah hits the nail on the head. Like the one who leaves the table to betray Jesus, like the disciples who flee from the garden, like the one who obstinately rejects any connection to Jesus, like the disciples who are nowhere to be found at the cross, we have all betrayed and denied Jesus, turned our backs and bolted. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way. Any of them could be any of us. And on any given day, not just this day, they often are.

Today, but truly on so many days, we find ourselves turned to our own way like the lost sheep, isolated, separated, bereft of true community. Community with God especially, but also with one another, and – heaven knows – with ourselves. God, our triune God, is the very ideal of community. God has made us to be in relationship, to be in community as the people of God. But so often we are separated, either by things we have done that we should *not* have done, or by not having done things that we *should* have done. Or we are separated because of someone else's choices or actions. And we stay separated, turned to our own way, because we don't know how to reconcile, or maybe we don't *want* to reconcile, or we don't feel it is safe to reconcile. Life, after all, is complicated and so we go about our lives – going to work or school or church, or volunteering, or interacting with family, friends and neighbors – as if all is right with the world. At least with OUR world. But, we know in our hearts that all is NOT right with the world – ours or anyone else's. We know in our hearts there are yawning chasms.

Chasms of brokenness and missing the mark. We have only to listen to the daily news with its stories of refugees and immigrants fleeing atrocities and poverty that is beyond our imagining, of individuals abusing their power and wealth, of governments starving or massacring their own people or someone else's, of sea level rise and environmental havoc, of the lack of basic necessities like health care and education, of the lack of simple decency, civility and respect for the dignity of every human being? But how often do we hear these things and think 'that's too big a problem – I can't do anything about it' or 'that's not my problem' and turn our backs and go our own way?

Or, we have only to look within our own community and see the poverty and the growing disparity between rich and poor at our doorstep, the homes broken by divorce, domestic violence, or drugs, or the estrangement and isolation brought on by more and more technology. But how often do we say, "I don't want higher taxes," or 'it's their own fault their life is like that,' turn our backs and go our own way?

Or, we have only to consider our own families and our own hearts and perceive the separations brought about by: arguments big and little, self-centeredness, the myth of being 'independent,' stress and anxiety, being too programmed and busy, seemingly insatiable desires for stuff or wealth or prestige, or simply not being present and listening to one another. How often do we refuse to look too closely at what is right in front – or deep inside – of us, turn our backs and go our own way? How often do we fail to realize, on whatever scale, that we *really are* all in this together? And together with God?

All in all, we begin to look like the lonely garbage dump in which stands Jesus' cross. The cross, right smack in the middle of all our refuse and cast-offs, and where we are nowhere to be found. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way. In the Garden of Eden, God asks Adam

and Eve, who now know that they are naked and have hidden themselves, “Where are you?” It isn’t really a question of geography, is it? Does God not ask this same question of us?

How did we get to this point? Or perhaps, how do we *keep* getting to this point? How have our journeys become so self-centered, so disconnected from God and one another, so broken? But more importantly, how do we find our way back into relationship, into community – with ourselves, with one another and with God? How do we return to the realization that we *really are* all in this together?

During Lent, we are on a journey to reconcile ourselves to God, to one another and to ourselves once again. A journey that hopefully leads us back to wholeness, towards the essence of who God has created us to be. A journey that leads towards our core identity – that of being children of God. There are lots of images for the spiritual journey. One of them is a bicycle wheel, with God as the center, the hub. Each of our journeys are the spokes. As we draw closer to God, we also draw closer to one another, realizing that we are all part of the Body of Christ. The author of the letter to the Hebrews writes, “let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

Right now, we sit in front of the cross, realizing with deep heaviness what our estrangement has brought about. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way. Now is the time to realize that the loving God who hangs on the cross – the loving God who is willing to go to any length to save us from ourselves – is one and the same as the Good Shepherd who goes out looking for the lost sheep. Looking, that is, for you and me. Though we sit in front of the cross, we know that there is more to this story than just today. We know that *the day* IS approaching. So, if *this* day is to make any difference at all, then now is the time to take stock of those chasms that need to be bridged, the reconciliations that await our actions, the work that God has given us to do. Now is the time to provoke one another to love and to good deeds. Now is the time to come together as community to be the Body of Christ in this world. +