

**Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany – Year C**  
**February 24, 2019**  
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**- SERMON -**

Roadblocks! Doesn't it annoy you when you're trying to get somewhere and there's a roadblock that slows you down?!

You make all the preparations to get to your destination, you gas up the car, you even get it washed so it looks nice when you get there. You're driving along and, there it is. Roadblock! Because of something. What? An accident up ahead? Something having fallen into the road?

Whatever it is, you are stopped. And now you either have to wait until whatever caused it has been moved, or you move *v-e-r-y, v-e-r-y* slowly until you pass by the cause of the roadblock. Once you pass by and see what it is, then, THEN, you can drive by and pick up your momentum again and move toward your destination.

There's a story, which is supposed to be true, about a guy named Rory Johnson, 29 years old, who was arrested back in May for a liquor store robbery in Elkhart, Ind. Johnson had parked in the back of the store to make it convenient for his getaway, but had trouble exiting because of congestion due to road construction – ROAD Block!

Five minutes after the robbery, he was still sitting in his car, having moved only a few feet, and liquor store employees pointed him out to police – Not Good!

So, here we are. Everyone here is on a journey. Life's journey. I'm sure a lot of you, when interviewing for a job, for instance, may have had the person interviewing you ask the question, "So, where do you see yourself in five years?" Have you had that question?

Those of you who are goal oriented will have your goals laid out, right? Hopefully written down, and you would know all the short-range goals you need to work toward getting there.

What I love about the Bible is all the stories in it showing guidelines for us to follow to help us reach our goal(s). It even gives straightforward lists of what to do, and what not to do, to help us reach our goals. It's great!

One story we read this morning showed the example of Joseph. Here's a guy who, when he was young, had an idea of what his future looked like.

He had eleven brothers. When Joseph was seventeen, he was tending the flocks with his brothers, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

His father, Israel, loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; so, he made an ornate robe for Joseph (you've heard about the coat of many colors?). Well, when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him.

Then, Joseph had two different dreams and told them to his brothers (probably not a good idea), but saying, basically, that one day they would all bow down to him. They would bow down to him?! So, they hated him all the more. They considered killing him but sold him, instead, to some Ishmaelites who were travelling by.

ROAD Block! - Not exactly what he had planned for his life's journey...

And Joseph experienced some other very bad situations (i.e., continuous-slow-down-in-the-journey-to-his-destination!). However, Joseph obeyed God and did the right thing and he ended up in a very high-ranking position under Egypt's Pharaoh where he was empowered to use his wisdom to save all of Egypt and the nations around them from a famine – including his brothers and father. It's a great story, but our example is in today's reading.

After their father died, the brothers sent a message to him asking him to forgive them of the sins and the wrongs they had committed in treating him so badly.

When he read the message, Joseph wept.

Then, (ooh, here it comes) his brothers came and threw themselves down, bowing before him and said "We are your slaves".

So, here's the example. Joseph could have taken his hostility out on them right then and there. He was in a position under Pharaoh where he had all kinds of options.

But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I God? You planned something bad for me, but God – BUT God – produced something good from it, in order to save the lives of many people..."

In the natural, you, me, most anyone would have responded so totally different – but Joseph loved his brothers, and responded accordingly. Destination reached!

Jesus said in our Gospel reading this morning, "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you."

We are on a journey – life's journey. On any journey, we need directions, a map, a GPS that will tell us where to turn, where not to turn. Paul gives us directions in his letter to the Colossians.

A few verses before our reading this morning Paul said, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is...” then, this morning we read, “...Rid yourselves of such things as anger, rage, malice, slander, and obscene language. Don’t lie to each other.”

ROAD Blocks!

None of us want these roadblocks in our lives. Not only do they hinder our relationships with friends, family, co-workers, etc., but they hinder our journey in our personal relationship with Christ. AND they affect our ministry. Oh, and just a reminder, our friends, family, co-workers are a part of our ministry. Sometimes we think our ministry involves only those out there – those at the food pantry, at the thrift store, the homeless, that person on the street I just gave a couple dollars to – those out there... But our actions minister, or don’t minister, to everyone around us.

It’s much easier to smile and wear our “church” face once or twice a week, trying to show an example of who Christ is in our lives. It’s much harder to keep that going at home, isn’t it? In our everyday lives, when the little things can upset us so easily.

He left the top off the toothpaste – AGAIN! They keep leaving that cabinet door open!

Now, if you think I’m talking about anyone in particular here, I’m not. And my husband doesn’t do either of those things – well, maybe the cabinet door sometimes... (smile). But I’m talking to all of us. Because we all can have these tendencies. And this is really where we show who Christ is in our lives.

Remember in the beginning this morning when I talked about making all the preparations to get to our destination by gassing up the car and even getting it washed so it looks nice when you get there? Having been raised with Christ, we can know we have the Holy Spirit to with us to guide us. We are “filled” by the Holy Spirit. So, we have the fuel we need, and He is there to direct us.

If you use Google maps, they provide written directions to your destination. Also, how many of you use GPS or the Google Maps app which will even *vocally* speak the directions to you as you move along. My GPS has gotten me through many difficult situations).

If we need to get from point A to point B, any directions or instructions on how to get there would be rather helpful, true? Instead of floundering and trying to figure it out on our own?

So, even though we read this this morning, I am a strong believer that repetition is most helpful to our learning. Even as parents when trying teach our children something important, repetition can be key.

If you will, turn in your bulletin to Page 4, the second reading, second paragraph. Let’s read together slowly:

“Therefore, as God’s chosen, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (*that’s a big one*). Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you (*which is a whole bunch*), so also forgive each other.” – Let’s stop there.

Did you notice the word “forgive”? It’s mentioned 3 times! Watchmen Nee said that more ground is gained in the lives of believers through forgiveness than through any other single thing.

Is any of this easy? No. But can we do this? Yes, IF we follow Paul’s next instruction where he says,

“And over ALL these things put on love...” That’s our ‘car wash’! Putting on love.

That’s the greatest command we are given.

And then, at the end of our journey, we will hear, “Destination reached! Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

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