

1 John 2:5-6 & John 13:34-35

Whoever obeys God's word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in God: whoever says, "I abide in Christ," ought to walk just as he walked.

John 13:34-35

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

It is the longest walk in the world. About 1,200 years ago, relics that were thought to be of James, one of the 12 original disciples of Jesus, were discovered in northern Spain. They now reside at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela that was built on the site. For over a thousand years, Christians, and a few fascinated non-Christians, have made the journey to that cathedral. Tradition says that the journey begins at St. Jean Pied de Port in southern France and travels 500 miles to the cathedral in Santiago.

Many books and essays have been written about journeys along the Camino as it is called...The Road in Spanish. Some read like travelogues, discussing the terrain and the towns and the scenery. Some talk about the spiritual journey that the walk is for many—who seek answers or find themselves stuck and walk the Camino in the hopes of being broken out of the rut of their daily lives. Some celebrate that there are no rules about the journey along the Camino...some people only walk a couple of miles a day, or less...and take buses or vans the rest of the way...Each person walks as much or as little as they want or need to...

But there is one thing that all of the articles and books talk about....The other folks they meet who are also journeying on the Camino. I suppose it is possible to walk the whole 500 miles without talking to another person on the journey, but it doesn't seem like anyone actually does that...CEOs, nuns, gap-year high school grads, those who've lost children or spouses, those who've won lotteries...from every inhabited continent, of every race...all kinds of folks

Inevitably, having met at one of the many hostels or hotels along the way, for a few hours, for a day, sometimes for weeks....people begin to walk together...and walking together they eventually share their reasons for walking, or their needs, or their hopes, or just their stories...these are the great memoirs of the Camino...the stories of "Walking With"....

Many of the folks on the Camino have said that they sense that in their midst, the Spirit of God is walking with them and it helps them remember that even away from the Camino, they are never alone...Some describe that presence as almost palpable.

And walking with the people is certainly something God is reported to have done in scripture...From the Garden of Creation to the Emmaus Road, scripture is filled with stories of the Spirit, or the person of Jesus Christ walking with people, sharing life with them.

Maybe that's why somewhere along the way, "walking" and "living" seemed to merge in peoples' thinking. Many of the translations of today's passage from First John don't say "walk as he walked" they say live as he lived. I suppose that's because life is a journey...just as walking with someone is.

This week Jessica stuck her head into my office to tell me she was going to spend time with a member of Northminster...and that they were going to take a walk together...and...it seemed such a right thing to do...because something happens when we walk together that strikes me as downright holy.

When you walk with someone, you have to match their pace...you slow down or speed up until you find a pace that fits...otherwise, you aren't walking together...you are just both walking to the same place...and one inevitably ends up way ahead. Walking together is about adjusting to the needs and the circumstances of those you are with.

Jesus certainly did that...he met people where they were...in the needs they were having in the moment...he stayed true to himself and his calling, but he stopped when someone needed him to stop...In the passage that would have been the lectionary text for today, he was on his way to tend to the daughter of Jairus, a high official...when a woman who had been made an outcast by society because of her health, reached out to touch him...and he stopped and praised her faith that healed her and her bravery that led her to claim that healing.

But I don't have to tell any of you folks who just got back from Kentucky about "walking with"....you've been doing it for over a week...walking with your team members and friends, walking with the families you were helping... As sure as I'm certain each of you has earned some rest and lots of air conditioning for the rest of the summer...I'm sure that as you walked together, you weren't alone...because Jesus was walking with you...in the smiling face of a team mate, in the much needed jokes in the van, in the times of rest and conversation...in the hard work you were doing...In those times you were dwelling in Christ...Walking with Jesus...living as he lived...as he lives. And here's something else I'm sure of...

That there were many others walking there with you....for all through last week...whether they were wearing one of these or not...you had hundreds of people praying for you, supporting you emotionally, financially, spiritually...your families, your friends and this church family...we have all tried to walk with you...in prayer most of all.

And that's one of the amazing things about walking with Jesus...about loving one another and loving God...that we can bind our lives to others' lives...sometimes by walking physically with one another...sometimes by sharing our journey's through our connection through the Spirit of God...who promises to be with us...who binds us together in love.

You aren't the only ones who have been walking with Jesus this week though...Your journey was joined by many different journeys...all ways that people have sought to love one another...and so have walked with Jesus....lived like Jesus...

There was that amazing bridge walk in Charleston last Sunday evening. Still reeling from the hateful murders at Mother Emanuel Church last week...thousands of people...Christians, Jews, Muslims, people of all faiths and races and no faith gathered together to walk hand in hand across the Charles Ravenal Bridge, creating a unity chain...Strangers and friends held hands...and they were joined in prayer by thousands more across the country...

Today, in over 100 cities, people will walk together...the last Sunday in June is Pride Parade Sunday in most of the country...and Chicago's parade will be kicking off in just a couple of hours. You may not know it...but you are walking in that parade today....You see the Coalition of Welcoming Churches has always been a part of the parade since the organization began...and Northminster is a member...Wonderful volunteers will be walking, carrying a big sign with the names of each of the more than 30 churches who are a part of the Coalition. Many of the volunteers agree to pray for the church whose banner they are carrying if no one from that church is there to carry it. The coalition marches so that all will know they are loved and honored and welcomed by God...many will say that seeing so many church folks marching with them and for them is the most moving part of the parade...next year maybe some of us can be walking with our sisters and brothers and holding our own sign...but today...we will still walk with them...as they walk with Christ in their midst and we join them in prayer...

This is one of the things I love about our tradition...that we draw our common identity not from who we are, but who God is....and so all work done in the name of Christ...all love that is shared by those who seek to walk with God...is love that we are a part of...

Some of that loving work we do ourselves...confident that the Spirit of God is working in our midst and that we are joined by many others who are with us in Spirit...and some of it is done by others...

We want to thank you for your work this week...but mostly we want to thank God...that the Spirit placed a calling on all of our lives...to walk as he walked...going out among

those who are marginalized, those who others reject or vilify...and being not their deliverer...but someone they could walk with...someone who would share their journey...maybe just for a day...maybe just for a week...and perhaps, in the unity of the Spirit for a lifetime.

Now for all of us comes the challenge...the everyday walk...

The folks who walked across the bridge in Charleston were inspired to respond to a vicious act of hatred with love...but now they, and we, have hard work to do, walking together in the spirit of love to find real solutions to the cancer of racism and hate.

The folks who walk the Camino may have transforming experiences, but they must find a way to bring some of that transformation into their daily walks away from the mountains of Northern Spain to the day-to-day life on Main Street...

The folks who will march today in love will need to find ways to respond in love to our many brothers and sisters inside the church and out who believe we are being unfaithful...and to walk with those lgbt brothers and sisters who have been so injured by the church that merely walking into our doors is too painful.

And each of you...each of you who has worked so hard this week, and perhaps in weeks in years past, are invited to find ways to let this not simply be a mountain top experience...but an invitation to continue to walk as you have walked this week...sharing your lives and your gifts and your work with one another...being transformed not just by an 800 mile journey...but by the daily journeys God makes with each of you, with each of us...

What's the old saying...we can't just talk the talk...we have to walk the walk....

Christ has inspired each of us in various journeys along the way...may we be inspired to walk the walk with one another...and with all those God places in our path...adjusting our pace to theirs...learning from their journey...sharing our journey with them...and always in a spirit of Love...and then...and then...all will know who and whose we are by how we love another...walk with one another...May God make it so...