

Sunday, June 26, 2022 Pentecost3 ***“Letting God Lead”***

2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14 Galatians 5:1,13-25 Luke 9: 51-62

A group of people are having a good time dancing. Another couple joins the group but it soon becomes apparent that they have not danced together before. There is a bit of awkwardness as to where to put hands and how to stand facing each other. The music continues and the group are enjoying themselves as they move to the beat together. The couple are stressed over not being in sync and moving like the others. Finally one of the group who are dancing comes over to them and says, one of you has to lead- the other has to follow. Depending upon the kind of dance, this is what is expected when people dance together- one leads and one follows. Usually the one who leads knows the routine, steps and follows the rhythm well; eventually the partner learns and follows.

Since our Pentecost celebration over three weeks ago, there have been recognitions, celebrations and a time to recognize the need and the desire to experience God’s Spirit as individuals and as a church. As we celebrated the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, we tasted the bread and juice, and here in the sanctuary we felt the waters of baptism upon our faces. But when we consider how the Spirit moved amongst us it was not only through the experience of taste and feeling water, but it was in the silence of our hearts. As we called upon God to renew our faith, to hear our prayers and to lead us to what His purpose is for all of us ,what has been on our hearts and minds? What is God leading us to do as we live out our life on earth? We do not know what tomorrow will bring, but God does. The Spirit knows our lives and what we are called to do is to let God lead in the dance of life.

Elijah was a faithful man of God who saved the people of Israel from starvation and enabled them to refocus their faith on God, after he hears God in silence. He fled from the control of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel’s rule for a long time. It was not until God spoke to him to return to Israel and mentor Elisha about God’s purposes. Elijah’s task was to bring about change to the people and lead Elisha into taking on his leadership. When it was time for Elijah to be taken up into heaven, God called Elijah first to Bethel and then to Jericho and each time, Elisha proclaimed, “As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.”

Again God called Elijah to go to the Jordan River and again Elisha stated that he would be with him. But their followers knew that it was time for the Spirit to act and God to receive Elijah home in heaven. Elisha did not want Elijah to leave. He knew that his mentor, teacher and friend was being called by God. He was anticipating this loss of relationship and he was grieving. When they had crossed the River, Elijah asked, "Tell me what I may do for you before I am taken from you."

Elisha's request? "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." Elijah knew that this was a hard thing but told Elisha to watch him as he ascended. Elisha cried out in anguish and grief and tore his clothes in two pieces. He was having a dark moment of uncertainty and faith. He was unsure of his future without Elijah's guidance. He was lost in grief.

There are many people in our county experiencing this loss of hope, guidance and direction. According to the WECHU the use of illegal opioids is growing. The main concern is if and when people are using these drugs which have been mixed with something else and may lead to ultimate death. But there is hope for a change. This week thousands of naloxone kits are being distributed free in the city through mosques, synagogues and churches. Locally these kits are available the Shoppers Drug mart down the street. Dr Shanker's plea is to learn more about what is happening and to be ready to act as needed. For we who have faith, have hope and can share our faith as we strive to support those who are lost or in need of support.

Elisha was grieving and he showed it and disheartened he walked along the bank of the Jordan River where he saw Elijah ascend to heaven. He picked up Elijah's mantle, held it, and then rolled it up and struck the water. The water stopped flowing and Elisha walked through the riverbed. Those who were watching this saw what had occurred and declared, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." This was a day of mourning for Elisha but it was also a day for him to begin to take on the mantle of leadership. Elisha received God's Spirit and his spirit was renewed.. Elisha was now equipped to lead the people and to perform the miracles of God.

Many of us are familiar with Canada geese and in Southwestern Ontario, they are here almost year round. When we hear them honking overhead, we often look up and watch them as they fly. What seems odd as they fly in the V formation is that there is also the goose that

flies alone. That is, there is a loner goose, trailing at the back of the pack, sometimes over to the side, spoiling the V image. Why? Is the d goose a lazy goose? Or just unable to keep up, shy, lonely or just not ready to fly? Does it serve as a caboose, an overseer of the V like the rear guard?

The reason for this is "aerodynamics." On a long migration, geese do not fly alone for the same reason we do not live alone. It is just too hard. Geese travel in communes, a mix of families, singles and pairs that assemble in the nesting area before their flight. The theory is that they fly in a V formation so that the lead goose can take the wind's force, making it easier on the others. Each bird behind the one in front has progressively less drag. But the lead bird is not an alpha bird, it is the one that assumes temporary wind duty, and when it gets tired, it flies to the back of the pack, where it may straggle while regaining strength. If you are the bird in front you can only stay there so long and recovery may take awhile. Meanwhile, a new bird moves in. This rotation continues so that there is always a fresh bird in the front leading the way and this makes the flight easier for all of them."

Canada geese share the leadership of the flight and work cooperatively to get to their destination. Should we be like the goose that is alone- recovering or getting ready to take the lead? Or just where is it that we need to be as we experience the ups and downs of life?

Jesus knew that at some point in his ministry he would have to head to Jerusalem to face death. But for about three years he travelled around Galilee and Samaria and through villages and towns teaching, preaching and healing. Many people put their trust in him and believed him to be God's Son and promised messiah. Others were not sure what following Jesus really meant and after 2000 years we too wonder as well.

In Luke 9, we read about the Samaritan community which refused to receive him. Jesus' disciples were ready to destroy the community with fire but Jesus just walked away and walked on to another village. As he was walking Jesus was stopped by a person who wanted to follow him. When Jesus told him that he did not have a place he called home, they chose something different. They had good intentions but their real desire to follow was not there. Jesus told others "follow me". They gave Jesus excuses not reasons why they could not fully commit to

following him. Jesus did not like these excuses as they were short term reasons why they could not commit to following him. He said, if you really want to follow me, I lead and you do not look back, if you want to be a part of the kingdom of God. You must always look forward in faith and follow me. Using the image of plowing the field, we are reminded that when the field is prepared it is done evenly as the farmer steers the plough and focuses on what is ahead.

Are you considering whether to follow Jesus? Maybe you are looking at what it means to follow him? Are you willing to face forward and follow Jesus? There will be times when you will be asked to step up and lead others to do the tasks of Christ, and other times to step back and recharge your strength. But as you consider whether to follow Christ remember that in Christ Jesus we have been shown how to live in love. Through God we are given life and it is the Spirit that will guide us and speak to us if we believe and are committed to following Jesus.

Letting God lead one's life does not mean life is dull and boring; you will not escape trials, losses or hurts, but when these occur, God's Spirit will guide you and enable you to receive the fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is love, joy, peace, patience kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This spiritual fruit is what others will share with you and what you will offer to others in Jesus' name and through God's love. But we must follow, and truly let God lead your life. A song written by Doris Akers and recorded by several artists including Elvis Presley includes these lyrics. Let us come before God as we seek to let God lead our lives now and always. Let us pray.

Loving God, we pray that as we come to you we now commit and recommit our lives to you for we seek your strength, guidance, love and care. By faith, we receive your grace and have hope to carry on. We know that there are and will be times when we feel we cannot do anything, lead us O God.

*Lead me, guide me along the way For if you lead me I cannot stray
Lord let me walk each day with you, Lead me my whole life through. Amen*