

It is tempting on this Sunday before Independence Day to direct our attention to the Gospel for this morning. This passage from Matthew 10 deals with hospitality, with welcoming. Jesus directly says *Whoever welcomes you welcomes me and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.* In the histories of our families, we have all come here from other places, our forebears often with limited language skills in English and perhaps with limited education. And now our national conversation, which is not always conversation marked by dialogue and by listening; now our national conversation raises this issue once more with the issue of welcoming hanging in the air. But Jesus says what he says.

Our Psalm this morning is a hymn of praise to God, marked by a sense of adoration and deep joy at the presence of God -- a God of love and faithfulness; a Covenant God who has established a royal lineage of the house of David. Ultimate kingship --however--belongs to God. Our last verse in the reading states *Truly the Lord is our ruler; the Holy One of Israel is our King.*

For a moment, I would have us look elsewhere, to the reading of the day from Romans chapter 6. Earlier in Romans, Paul has been speaking of dying and rising with Christ through baptism. But now he changes his approach and speak of enslavement. He speaks of being slaves and of changing master.

Consider just a portion of what Chris read for us this morning. Romans chapter six: *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey....?*

Slavery. Paul argues that first we were enslaved to sin and to the power of sin. This he envisions as a corruption so powerful that it can destroy us. He presents sin as a power way beyond our usual conception of sin, a power that can tyrannize and control. A power that can overwhelm.

When we speak of sin and of the power of sin it is easy for our eyes to glaze over. Oh, we have heard this before. Sin sounds just a little judgmental. It sounds a little self righteous at times. At times it seems a bit picky: A little mistake here or there. The power of sin can at times seem puny. So, perhaps more to the point in our America, an America that is facing an opioid epidemic, let's speak of sin in terms of addiction, as having the power of an addictive presence. I am not equating sin and addiction, but rather suggesting that the power of addiction provides us with a window to see the power of sin when in any form it is embraced and encouraged.

The opioid or morphine-like addiction in Wisconsin continues to climb and to influence our society. In 1999 the number of deaths due to opioid addiction was 60; in 2014 it was 400. Heroin in 1999 accounted for 25 deaths; in 2014 it was 248 in Wisconsin. Consider these statistics also developed by the Department of Human Services deaths due to injuries: The number of deaths per 100,000 persons due to injuries from motor vehicles was 15 in 1999; in 2014 it declined to 10 per 100,000. However, the number of deaths from injuries due to overdose in the same period increased from 5 to 15 per 100,000 persons

The power of an addiction is a good image to impress upon us the power of sin. The power of an addictive presence --a debilitating and degenerating presence--is a good way to think of the way in which any sin can enslave and dominate us.

An addict is a person -- a person with gifts and talents and abilities; with interests and dreams and relationships--a person who has disappeared behind a label. And so if we are to speak of sin as addiction we should say right up front that we are all addicts. When we say in the Lord's prayer *for give us our trespasses* perhaps from time to time we should say *forgive us all of our addictions*. Forgive us of all those places in our lives that have the power to enslave us.

What might these be? Some are little, some large. We can develop a long list of things to which we can present ourselves: addiction to work, addiction to the accumulation of money or things, addition to worry, addiction to sports, addiction to shopping, addiction to self, addiction to power or greed, addiction to isolation and loneliness, addiction to self denigration and guilt, addiction to negativity, and... addiction to drugs. : *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey....?* To whom or to what do we present ourselves? In Paul's time, individuals desperate for food and shelter and facing the prospects of apparent death would present themselves to someone and ask to be their slaves. All depended upon the character of the master. For a house slave could become eventually a slave in the mines. To whom or to what are we enslaved? . In The Message, Eugene Peterson terms being enslaved to sin as living under an old tyranny. And so there is this idea of bondage, of being controlled by forces too strong to overcome.

Paul contrasts this addicted life style with a new liberating enslavement which he terms enslavement to God. He speaks of becoming slaves of righteousness. When we say *Jesus is Lord*, we are saying that we are submitting to a new Master not merely as believers or as church goers or as

spiritually active people, but also as slaves. Slaves to his leadership and to his ethical concerns. This enslavement produces meaning and purpose. This enslavement requires us to think about what Jesus' words and teachings mean for us today in a world vastly different from his. What does it mean to pay attention to his teachings, to, as one of our collects states, to mark, read, learn and inwardly digest holy scripture. What does it mean to be his slave? To pray, as we do, through Christ our Lord. To shoulder his cross?

In presenting this paradoxical idea of being enslaved to goodness in such a way that we are in fact liberated, Paul is arguing that the cross of Christ can become essentially a bridge on and over which the righteousness or the wholeness of God is in the person of Christ transferred to us, bringing life and joy and peace and the liberation of our spirit. As slaves to God or as slaves of righteousness we paradoxically are set free to become people who find their deepest meaning and purpose in love, in compassion, in a joyful appreciation of life, in gratitude, in relationships that are deepened and enriched, in generosity.

To whom and to what are we enslaved? Are we willing to submit to the spirit and to the power of God's love? To present ourselves in such a way as Jesus can truly become Lord?

NOTES

. George Washington, a good Anglican who helped found several Anglican churches in the new world, is also right when he speaks of being a patriot and a Christian. He writes *To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian. Yes.*

This past week, with thoughts of the Fourth of July on my mind, I decided to delve into a bit of history of the Episcopal Church historically. And I ran into the formidable figure of Jackson Kemper, the first Bishop of Wisconsin and, before that, the Missionary Bishop to the Norwest. A quote of his and some brief background is in the bulletin.

IN 1834, Kemper was asked by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the church to travel to Green Bay to report on a school set up there by the Rev. Richard Cadle and his wife. There's a journal online if you're interested. A year later, he was consecrated as Missionary Bishop over a huge sprawling territory that he was supposed oversee.

Here's how it all started:

Early in the winter of 1835, he reached St. Louis, which was his headquarters—he can scarcely be said ...to have a home, and indeed throughout much of the remainder of his life he wandered far and wide upon his laborious mission; “his saddle-bags contained his worldly goods—his robes, his communion service, his Bible, and his prayer-book.”

Apparently centuries later Jackson Kemper heard the call of Jesus, *take nothing for the journey*. It was a costly experience: Thirty five years of essential homelessness. Separation from his children. Isolation. Kemper established Kemper College in St. Louis to train clergy because he was convinced that many back East would not ever be willing to come West. The college failed. But other clergy, a few years later, were trained for the

west. IN 1842 Kemper established Nashotah House and later Racine College. He encouraged translation of the Bible into native tongues and advocated for Native Americans. He spent much time in Indian Territory and Kansas and away from Wisconsin. He died in his 81st year.

Mission is a very difficult process. It is risky, demanding, sometimes dangerous. And Mission can be right next door. Mission is not just for the Jackson Kemper's of this world. It is interesting to note that the Episcopal Church in 1835 passed a resolution that made all members of the Episcopal Church automatically also members of the Domestic and Foreign Mission Society. The point? All of us as Episcopalians are to be involved in mission.

Sometime in the next few weeks I am hopeful that all of us here at St. Andrew's will be willing to go door to door and invite our neighbors in for some ice cream. Unlike the others, we are not being asked to preach a message of repentance, but a message of invitation. We're just going to put our little toes into the waters of mission. It is the very least that we can do.

Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, I am strong.

In the name and in worship of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

REBECCA AND OTHER WOMEN The Rev. Brian E. Backstrand July 6, 2014

Last Sunday we encountered the severe and challenging story of the binding of Issac. Now we come to a detailed story of a search for a bride, a tale almost placid by comparison, but filled with interesting detail. This morning, let us look at it together for a time. This is the story of the finding of the woman Rebecca who will be the bride of Issac, Sarah and Abraham's son. And with this story, the cycle of stories of the patriarch Abraham and the people of his generation will come to an end.

Sarah has died in her 127th year. Abraham is described as *well advanced in years*. He knows that his own time is coming to an end and he enlists the help of the oldest servant to find a bride for his son. Abraham is concerned about two things. First, he wants to make sure that the bride comes from his people, the H'biru people. He fears that it will be too easy for Issac to marry one of the people of this new region, the Canaanites. To marry someone from his own people necessitates going to Haran, the place from which Abraham has come. This is Abraham's first concern. His second concern is that Issac not go there himself. Abraham fears that if Issac goes he will not come back. If Issac does not come back, the promise of the land made by YHWH to Abraham and his future generations will not be fulfilled.

It is easy to see that the servant is the most important character in the story even if he is nameless. Nameless people often carry a big burden in this society. Here is a man burdened with a huge responsibility of seeking and finding. He brings ten camels. He carries gifts. He travels the long distance to the city of Nahor called Haran.

He prepares, he travels, he prays, he waits, he discerns from among the women who come in the cool of the evening to draw water.

This Rebecca whom he encounters is quite a prize. Not only is she young and pretty but she also must have been very active and strong. Drawing water for 10 camels from a deep well would be quite a task, since each camel would drink between 10 and 20 gallons of water each day. That 200 gallons of well water being drawn. This girl's in shape! The servant puts jewelry on her and the servant eventually shares his mission with her brother and others in the woman's family. And the young woman who drew all the water and wears the new jewelry does not hesitate but commits herself to traveling back to Abraham's dwellings in a distant land. He is unknown to her. Her future husband Issac is unknown to her as well. The land and all of its people has not been seen. But she exhibits courage and strength and faith. She does not hesitate but joins the servant in the return trip.

What is it like to face challenges in a distant land? To journey with faith and with perhaps also a sense of adventure? As they set out, we can see in the journey of Rebecca and Abraham's servant a recapitulation of the initial journey, the journey that brought Abraham and Sarah and all of their people into this new land.

Here is a woman of faith, traveling by faith to a new land. At the end she meets Issac in the region of the Negeb out walking in the evening. Our story ends: *Then Issac brought her into his mother*

Sarah's tent. He took Rebecca and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Issac was comforted after his mother's death.

This weekend we remember the birth of our nation. Long before the War for Independence and the decision by the colonists to strike out for independence, both men and women had taken the long, arduous and sometimes deadly journey to what was described as the New World. With this weekend celebration in mind, I am constrained to think of other Rebeccas—other women who faced long odds, who exhibited strength and courage, who traveled into strange places on faith. Some of these were physical with the great vast continent of the New World stretching west. Others were social, religious and political strange places.

Anne Bradstreet was born Anne Dudley in Northampton England in 1612. Her father managed the estate of a wealthy Puritan landowner. The girl had access to the estate's library and she read and wrote under the encouragement of her own father. At the age of sixteen she married Simon Bradstreet a Puritan associate of her father's. Anne and Simon and Anne's parents all became involved in the Massachusetts Bay Company and together sailed to North America in 1630 on the *Arabella*, the flagship of the Puritan migration led by John Winthrop.

Bradstreet survived the 76 day voyage on stormy seas and the primitive living conditions in the colonies. She survived the birth of eight children and the frequent absence of her husband, an administrator of the colony. She survived the devastation of the fire that took their home in the distant town of Andover. And somehow in the midst of this challenging new life in a distant past she wrote poetry. The result was the first book published by any one—man or woman—living in the English colonies in North America. Strength and courage. Faith in the midst of strange places. Ann Bradstreet died in the New World in 1672. Her collected work, although much admired in her own day, was not published until 1867.

We are familiar with the great passion for justice that was the hallmark of the life of Harriet Beecher Stowe, another woman of strength, faith and courage. We know her for the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—a work that ignited the anti-slavery movement when it arrived on the scene in 1851, appearing in fifty-three installments in a magazine called *ERA*. Stowe's writing resulted in a new awareness of the evils of slavery. Coming from a deeply religious family which also valued education, Stowe put her talents to work and journeyed with strength and faith and courage into a new land that had never been

fully scene—the landscape and the land of the anti-slavery movement. She did this despite a number of obstacles and challenges. Harriet had six children, she raised them in a home without central heat, electricity or much money. She fought depression and ill health. One writer described her life:

Torn between babies to nurse, diapers to change, overturned chamber pots to clean up after, untrained servant girls to instruct, half-written stories to finish, puddings to make, children to mind, comfort and teach, dishes to wash, and bills to pay, Harriet seems to have led the most fragmented and harried existence imaginable.

Uncle Tom's Cabin sold 500,000 copies in 5 years.

What we may not know about Harriet Beecher Stowe was that she came from an American family that influenced American in the 19th century more than any other family. Her father was Rev Lyman Beecher, a Presbyterian minister known for his evangelism. The family was large. The children including especially the girls were well educated. They founded schools, participated in the campaign to stop the removal of the Cherokee nation during the Andrew Jackson administration. One son served as President of a college in Illinois and was active in the abolitionist movement there.

Catherine Esther Beecher was the eldest and was known for founding a school for women in Hartford Connecticut—a school that eventually expanded to become Hartford Female Seminary. This is Catherine speaking to us from one of her essays:

It is to mothers and to teachers that the world is to look for the character which is to be enstamped on each succeeding generation, for it is to them that the great business of education is almost exclusively committed. And will it not appear by examination that neither mothers nor teachers have ever been properly educated for their profession?"

-- *Suggestions Respecting Improvements in Education,*

The list of Rebecca like women in the New World—educating, writing, exploring, advocating—is a long one. Includes Eva Booth, the daughter of William Booth, the founding of the Salvation Army in England. Eva held the first Salvation Army meeting in 1879.

And here are some other names, names of American women who ventured forth as leaders.

Olympia Brown: The first woman to pastor in a Unitarian church, serving the church in Racine Wisconsin. Prominent advocate for woman's suffrage.

Anne Hutchinson: Advocate for religious liberty

Catherine Spaulding: First leader and founder of the Sisters of Nazareth in the frontier region of Kentucky. She founded orphanages and schools as she and others reached out to the poor and the orphaned children in Kentucky.

Elizabeth Anne Seton: Elizabeth Seton founded the first religious community of women in the United States, the Sisters of Charity. Her mother died when she was only three. She began as an Episcopalian from an ardent Episcopalian family. She became Roman Catholic later in her life, attracted to the doctrine of the Real Presence. Her work among the poor in the new nation eventually resulted in sainthood. Pope Paul VI canonized her on September 14, 1975. She was the first native-born saint of the United States.

And so we see that Rebecca was not the only woman of faith to take journeys, both physical and otherwise. On this weekend of our nation's independence we are most always mindful of the men of our nation's past. Many Biblical accounts mention and focus upon mostly men. But the lives of people like Rebecca, Sarah, Miriam, and Ruth – not to mention Mary, Mary Magdalene, Elizabeth and many others—are also paralleled in our nation's history by other individuals—women of strength and faith and courage who waded into conflicts and controversies; who journeyed into strange lands; who accomplished so much in challenging us to be better as Americans.

Today we mention a few. Women of faith. Women who blazed a path for all of us to follow.

Let us take upon us the yoke of Christ and his gentle burden of love. And let us as persons of faith take our own journeys and follow Him.

In the name of God—Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

6 PENTECOST *TWO JOURNEYS* The Rev. Brian Backstrand

July 5, 2015

The idea of a journey as a metaphor for our lives is pretty commonplace. And it's pretty Biblical. The Bible is filled with stories of journeys from the journey of Abraham from Haran into land promised but never seen to the journeys of missionaries like Paul who cross boundaries of language and culture to preach the Good News of Jesus and his redemption because they are constrained to do so: Because they are called.

Today in our Gospel lesson we witness the sending of twelve followers of Jesus after Jesus has hit a major impasse in his own ministry—the rejection of his ministry in his hometown. In response, in the midst of healing and teaching in other villages, he calls his closest followers and sends them. He sends them out two by two and with pretty much nothing in the way of resources: No extra clothes, no bread, no bag, no money. What they do have is authority over unclean spirits and a general outline of how to proceed.

It is common in the culture of Jesus' day for healers, teachers, wonder workers to enter villages unannounced, be hosted during their stay by one family, and then to be tested. Do they have power? Do they speak a truth that fits the moment and that sinks into the very bones of one's consciousness? Can they heal and do they heal with power. Are they to be trusted? Are they to be followed?

This is how John Dominic Crossan imagines Jesus' own journey in the early days of his ministry:

He comes as yet unknown into a hamlet of Lower Galilee. He is watched by the cold hard eyes of peasants living long enough at subsistence level to know exactly where the line is drawn between poverty and destitution. He looks like a beggar, yet his eyes lack the proper cringe, his voice the proper whine, his walk the proper shuffle. He speaks about the rule of God, and they listen as much from curiosity as anything else. They know all about rule and power, about kingdom and empire, but they know it in terms of tax and debt, malnutrition and sickness, agrarian oppression and demonic possession. What, they really want to know, can this kingdom of God do for a lame child, a blind parent, a demented soul screaming its tortured isolation among the graves that mark the edges of the village? Jesus walks with them to the tombs and, in the silence after the exorcism, the villagers listen once more, but now with curiosity giving way to cupidity, fear, and embarrassment. He is invited, a honor demands, to the home of the village leader.

Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, xi.

And so their journey begins. With nothing in the way of the world's goods, with fear and trembling most likely. With the sending of their leader. With a spiritual presence that they perhaps only dimly understand.

We have been on such a journey. Early in my ministry here we went out two by two with no bag, no additional clothing. We carried no big proclamation of spiritual force and insight. No, just a little flyer to offer the neighbors round about—telling them of an ice cream social that we are approaching with a good deal of fear and trembling ourselves.

And we have been on other journeys. Some involve Thank you Baskets, some involve opening our church doors to others, some involve the journey into holy scripture during Bible study. There's even the monthly journey to come to this place in the middle of the week and sit around tables in the fellowship room and dream and share and plan as a Bishop's Committee.

But these things are pretty much small potatoes in comparison to hitting the road and feeling the dust and the oppressiveness of the sun and the anxiety of entering into strange places.

What other journeys are before us that we need to take? Our Breast Cancer Survivor Support Group has just begun and that will be a significant journey for this community of faith. And I suspect that we will be offered other journeys as well in the days ahead.

But today is the fifth of July, placing us squarely in the middle of the Fourth of July holiday. We think naturally of other journeys. Journeys of the pioneers across the vast prairie expanses of the American West, perhaps. The journey of Washington and his troops across the Delaware. The great marches of troops in the Civil War. To be sure, there are some grand journeys in our history as Americans. But there are difficult and tragic journeys, too. Journeys painful to contemplate. One thinks of the journey of the Cherokee and the Seminole and the Lakota peoples. The Cherokee's trail of tears – enforced by American troops. The dispossessing of First Americans from the land. And then there are the many ships filled with

slaves—part of the triangle trade—and the sad history of our own people – people owning slaves, others ignoring the realities of slavery, and many others protecting property rights instead of human rights and so allowing the curse of slavery and of the subjugation of African peoples to continue. A sad, evil journey.

We fought a Civil War from 1860 to 1865 about the right of states of a federal union to succeed from that union. Eventually the issue of slavery was joined in the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862 when President Lincoln saw that such a move was in the interests of the battle itself. And the scars of that battle have persisted.

A union was saved in that journey and a people liberated. But slavery is more than the legal ownership of one individual by another. Slavery has a long reach. It can be economic. It can be social. It can be housed in the hearts and minds of one people even as they look upon another and argue that they're doing just fine, that they have just the same opportunity as everyone else. It is the people who are being subjugated, put down, who have the right to say who is bigoted and who is not.

And so we come to another march – adding it to the list of the itinerant journey of the disciples, to the journey of Washington and his troops, to so many other journeys.

This one takes place in the South in the middle of 1963. And it was called, appropriately enough, The Freedom March. If the first journey in this sermon was the journey of the disciples, put this one down as the second journey – it is the journey of Civil Rights in America.

It is a common place for us on the Fourth of July to celebrate who we are. And we Americans are pretty good at that. And for good reason. There is much to commend about a nation that allows dissent, a nation that is willing to transfer power without riot or vengeance or war. About a nation that allows

individuals to set personal goals and work towards them; about a nation that allows freedom of travel, freedom of expression, freedom of choice in many ways.

But in celebrating who we are we need to remember that not all parts of our history are glorious; not all parts of our history are remarkable.

9 reasons people use drugs and become addicts ~

1. People suffering from anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression or other mental illnesses use drugs and alcohol to ease their suffering.
2. People see family members, friends, role models or entertainers using drugs and rationalize that they can too.
3. People become bored and think drugs will help.
Boredom is a big factor in drug abuse in teens and young adults. People in this age bracket generally don't have bills, jobs and all the stresses that go along with adulthood. So it's easier to become bored and want to try something new and exciting. Drug use is often thought of as a way to escape the mundane world and enter an altered reality.
4. People think drugs will help relieve stress.
5. People figure if a drug is prescribed by a doctor, it must be ok.
6. People get physically injured and unintentionally get hooked on prescribed drugs.
7. People use drugs to cover painful memories in their past.
8. People think drugs will help them fit in.
When hanging out with friends, it's easy for people to want to fit in.
9. People chase the high they once experienced.

Nate Blair wrote these reasons in response to the death of his sister, Jennifer, who died at age 29 from drug abuse, a condition that she had struggled with for 13 years.

We can see this idea in the discussion that is raging across America to day in terms of drug abuse, particularly the opioid epidemic. Enslavement that leads to addiction -- spiritually or physiologically-- can lead to death. In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson terms being enslaved to sin as living under an old tyranny. And so there is this idea of bondage, of being controlled by forces too strong to overcome. Slavery. But then he considers the life and the sacrifice of Jesus the Anointed One and contrasts the life of enslavement with a new life a life of a kind of paradoxical liberation in which our enslavement to sin through the leap of faith becomes the liberating enslavement of our lives, minds

and spirits to Jesus. When we say *Jesus is Lord*, we are saying that we are submitting to a new Master not merely as believers or as church goers or as spiritually active people, but also as slaves. Slaves to his leadership and to his ethical concerns. Paul speaks of being enslaved to God. He speaks of become *slaves of righteousness*. On the eve of Independence Day, any such talk of enslavement--be it to sin or be it to righteousness -- might cause us to shudder but it should not. Paul is arguing that the cross Christ becomes essentially a bridge on and through which the righteousness or the wholeness of God in the person of Christ the Anointed One of God is transferred to us, bringing life and joy and peace and liberation of our spirit. As slaves to God or as slaves of righteousness we paradoxically are set free to become people who find their deepest meaning and purpose in love, in compassion, in a joyful appreciation of life, in gratitude, in generosity.

Sonny's blues

An addict is a person who has disappeared behind a label. We are all addicts. When we say in the Lord's prayer *for give us our trespasses* perhaps from time to time we should say *for give us all of our addictions*. What might these be? Well... addiction to pleasure, addiction to work, addiction to stuff, addiction to the accumulation of money or things, addiction to sports, addiction to shopping, addiction to self, addiction to isolation and loneliness, addiction to self denigration and guilt, addiction to negativity, addiction to anxiety, and... addiction to drugs. So,... in the language of Romans chapter six, to whom or to what do we present ourselves? To whom or to what are we enslaved? : *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the*

Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

One of the great accomplishments of the experiment in democracy that we know as America is seen in its ability to take in wave after wave of immigrants. Sometimes this transition has been fairly smooth -- especially in the case of people from Northern Europe in the 19th century. Persons from southern Europe have found the going more difficult. And other transitions to American soil have been especially painful, most notably the wave of forced immigration and suffering and subjugation of humanity that we know as slavery. The question, How did your people come to America, can develop some very real and painful silence when that question is put to persons with African heritage. And the treatment of Asian Americans, used in the development of trans-continental railroads is another aspect of American life in the 19th century--essentially another slavery--that we would like to overlook.