

The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa

Propers 8c

I Kings 19:15-16,19-21

Galatians 5:1,13-25

Luke 9:51-62

For the 15 years that I have been at St. Andrews, some of you have come to expect a yearly report regarding my annual fishing trip. Some I know, dread any mention of the trip, while others look forward to my humiliating excuses as to why others always come back with stories of fishing success that far surpass yours truly.

This year we did great, and I did ok. I caught more than some years, less than others, bigger than some smaller than others. There really no great events, no great stories from the trip...at least none that should be told in church, but...my insight and my sermon for today grew out of the experience I had steering the boat in the face of a northern Michigan wind. I have a small fishing motor, a 6 horse Mercury. The boat that comes with the cabin is just a standard 14 foot metal boat...nothing fancy... ..three metal seats and an anchor.

One evening, I was in the boat alone and trying to steer the boat in a pretty substantial wind. I was aiming for a flag pole at the end of the lake....that was the my focal point as I motored across the lake. Now as I said, the wind was substantial, but though it was not life threatening in an way, I needed to pay attention to what was ahead of me, to keep my eye and to set my face to where it was that I was heading.....if I turned away even a bit....the wind would blow me of course. But, trolling across a lake with a lure in the water I was always turning back. The lake was full of weeds, that's where the fish were.....so I was always looking back to jerk my rod to reel in the line to clean off the hook and to cast it out again. on the occasion, the rare occasion that I actually hooked a fish, well then you had to look back to try to reel it in.....now, granted more often that not the fish would eventually throw the hook.....but in the few seconds of fighting with the fish.....the wind would blow me off course....and then....on the very very very rare occasion that I actually caught a fish, then you had to fight with it to get it out of the net, off the hook and on to the stringer. By this time, the wind would have blown me completely off course....I might be headed back totally in the wrong direction.

Now, this was a very small lake.....and even blown off course was no big deal. I have fished this lake for 10 years, been around it hundreds of times. There are lots of landmarks that I know well.....but, what if the lake was bigger, what if I was not unfamiliar with it. What if the wind was life threatening?

In our Gospel this morning, Jesus turns, and sets his face toward Jerusalem. He begins a journey that will end in chapter 19 of Luke's Gospel where Jesus comes into sight of the city and weeps. Over a third of Luke's Gospel is taken up with Jesus and his journey to Jerusalem. He sets his face to Jerusalem, and nothing will stop him. Winds will blow against him to drive him off course. In this morning's gospel, Jesus faces the Samaritans who will not let him pass through their village. Their opposition does not blow him off course. He faces the misunderstanding of his disciples as they imagine him to be a messiah who will destroy those who oppose him. Their misunderstanding does not blow him off course. He also meets some would be disciples, who want to follow him, but not just yet. Their excuses do not deter him. Later he will face further opposition, misunderstandings and even plots against his life, but nothing will blow him off course. Jerusalem is the city of God, and God is drawing Jesus to that city. Jesus knows that his confrontation with evil and sin will reach its climax in Jerusalem and nothing will prevent him from reaching it.

How often in your life have you been blown off course. You set a goal, aim for it and life's winds come and turn you in another direction. Often those winds just blown out of nowhere. Sometimes those winds spin us around so violently, so painfully that we lose our way. Sometimes these winds are so treacherous, we feel as if we are drowning. Sometimes those winds are of our own making, our own choosing. Sometimes those winds blow in because we have abused the gifts God has given us.

As Paul tells the Galatians, we abuse our freedom by gratifying every desire. We find ourselves enslaved to our passions, we find ourselves lost and drowning in a sea of self indulgence. We lose sight of our goal. We get blown off course. We are lost. Paul tells us that the way to find our way back on course again, is to love. To love our neighbors as ourself and in love to become slaves to one another. We get back on course by acts of loving service toward our neighbor. Actions done in charity, food for the hungry, kindness to the hurting, welcome to the stranger, time offered to serve someone in need are means by which we find our way back when we are lost. Lives guided by the Spirit, lives lived in the love, peace, generosity, and gentleness of the Spirit are brought back on course when the storms of life batter us.

My friends, I believe that in God's steadfast love for each and every one of you, that no matter how fiercely the winds of life blow against you, no matter how much they blow you off course, the Spirit is always drawing us back on a path that leads to God. We are all on a journey to the City of God, and in God's love for us, we can be assured that we will arrive there. In the magnificent city of God's love we will find our hopes and dreams fulfilled in ways that we can only imagine. In God's love we will find fullness of freedom and fullness of life.