

“Where Will It Lead?”
Hebrews 5:5-10
John 12:20-33

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Where will it lead? Have you heard those words before? I think I heard them when I was a boy and I was wearing bell-bottom pants and my parents said, “Where will it lead? The good Lord knows where it will lead.”

Oftentimes, I think those words are used in that kind of context, where we’re trying to make the argument that we can’t go that direction; the good Lord knows where it will lead. And people have been worried about that for a long time. Three hundred years ago there was a fellow who started writing some hymns and the people said, “Where will it lead, those man-made hymns?” They were worried about it. Well, where did it lead? The fellow was Isaac Watts, and he wrote hymns like “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” and about 12 other hymns we have in our hymnals today.

“Where will it lead?” Perhaps it is a good question, because what happens does matter, it does lead us somewhere. I guess when I think about the idea of “Where will it lead” I always think about the poem by Robert Frost:

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth.*

(Then skipping to the last stanza)

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

It makes a difference, which road we take, which direction we go. When those Greeks came and they talked to Philip, he was a little confused about what this meant, so he went and got Andrew and finally they went to Jesus. And Jesus seemed to take this information and recognize which road to take for he starts talking, then, about what is coming, where he is going, where his road is leading. It’s not always completely clear. He gives us this idea of the seed falling on the earth. Sometimes I wish Jesus would just be a little more clear and say, “This is exactly what is going to happen.” But on the other hand, maybe he’s helping us see that all of us in some ways are seeds that have to let go of being a seed to become something new, to become what God calls us to be.

Hebrews helps us see that Jesus, by his reverent submission to God, becomes what God calls him to be, does what God asks of him. He gets to be the priest in the order of Melchizedek. Now, that's a little hard to understand because it's one of those stories out of the Old Testament that we don't often think about. But if we think of Melchizedek translating to "King of Righteousness," God calls Jesus, through his reverent submission and his attention to what God wants him to do, to become the priest and king of righteousness. That is, the one through whom we learn how to live right to be right with God and through whom we know how to follow the path of righteousness.

But the question remains so often in my mind, "Where will it lead, this following Christ?" Where will it lead? Oftentimes I feel that the world suggests that if I actually follow Christ I will lose out on so much. And yet God's promise is the opposite. If I follow Christ I will find who I can truly be, find life. Where will it lead?

There was an illustration I saw on a teacher's door recently about a violin string. Some of you at the university may have seen it. I got to thinking about it. So often I want to be free. I want to do my own thing. I have a hard time with the "obedience" thing. Then I thought about this violin string. If you lay a violin string out on a table it's free, I guess, but it can't do much, can it? It's not until it's stretched out on the violin that it can really do what it's made to do. It can be tuned, played, be in harmony with the other instruments, with the other strings.

Where will it lead if I follow Christ? Well, perhaps it means I won't be free and left on the table, but maybe I'll be stretched to play, stretched by God to do God's work, to know what God's will is for my life. Maybe then I can be tuned, be in harmony, be caught up with Jesus and know the path that he leads us to.

Still, it's interesting in these passages, as I hear Jesus talking to his Disciples, talking about being changed and recognizing the world as something that we have to let go of. It's hard for me to think about. And it's interesting that Jesus just talks about the change, he talks about our losing life and finding life. And we can talk about being stretched by God to play in the right way. That's all a little vague, isn't it? Yet we hear the call, the call to follow and to know that through him we'll find the life that we want.

Where will it lead? The promise is there of the harmonies of God. Often, where we will go and what will happen remains vague. Perhaps what we say around that phrase is what we need to know. We can only see to the bend in the road. We say, "God knows where it will lead."

Where will it lead? God knows. God knows, and that's enough. Amen.