



First United Methodist Church of Hanford

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.



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“Detours”

The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.” Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story: “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds. Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ “I replied, ‘Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ “The voice spoke from heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again. “Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. (Acts 11:1-13 NIV)

Acts is a spiritual map outlining the direction God was taking the early church. When Peter goes to Joppa and eats with the Gentile Roman Centurion Cornelius, the other apostles and believers in the group think he has walked off the map - he did not follow the intended or agreed upon route. Their voice of criticism sounded like that of a irritated GPS system calling for Peter to recalculate and get back on track with their original GPS coordinates, which was limited to and only about the way and law of God’s chosen people, the Jews.

Peter explains to them that God had shown him the context of a much larger map that revealed the new road God was building toward inclusion of the Gentiles, the outsiders, in the church. Peter took another road and found that the Holy Spirit was there all along. God’s command to Peter was essentially to march off the long-held maps that Peter and his people walked for thousands of years - to trust the detour; learn from it, and recognize the value of the experience. God’s vision to Peter was carving out a new route that would bring Jews and Gentiles together.

Because Peter marched off the old route, he begins to see how God’s plan for the whole world is unfolding like a huge gas station map. The Holy Spirit sent Peter, a Jew, and Cornelius, a Gentile, off their prescribed routes to meet each other as an example of the new route God was showing the church. No longer would Jews and Gentiles run separate paths but they would serve the same Lord as part of the same church.

So, I have two ways to go with the text.

1. I can tell you it's time for those of who follow Jesus and claim to be God's church to stop thinking their route, path, trail, or GPS is the only way to do and be church and start realizing God has a much bigger map.

OR

2. I can tell you that sometimes on our journey of faith, the detour is the road.

The detour is the road. It's on the detour we are our most vulnerable individually and communally, and we discover that can be our strength. It's on the detour we feel the most out of control, lost, or disoriented and discover that's exactly where we need to be for God to teach us, use us, shape us and show us the truth. It's on the detour we come to see a path forward or a passage through that was not visible any other way. It is the detour that teaches us more about ourselves, others, and more about God. It is the detour that often brings us back to center, transforms our perspective, broadens our understanding, shows us a better way, and opens the eyes of our mind and the ears of our heart to the fullness of God.

We have, all had detours in life I wasn't supposed to be a pastor, I had other plans. I wasn't supposed to go to seminary, I had a god job. I wasn't supposed to move to the USA. I was supposed to...I planned on...but God had something else in mind and used the detours to show me just how big God's map is and how small mine sometimes tends to be. It's in the detours that God does God's best work.

The past 16 months in some ways has been one big detour; for families, businesses, churches, schools, friendships, significant relationships, you name it and it probably had to make a detour this past year and a half. I think we vastly under-estimate the emotional, spiritual, and mental toll such a detour can take on all of us. And I think we vastly under-estimate what God has been teaching, revealing, growing, prioritizing, and transforming along the way.

We have to be like Peter, and trust the movement of the Holy Spirit. We have to get out of our own way and trust God knows what to do and how to do it. We have to open the whole map, take the detours, and let go of those internal navigation systems that hold us back, block others out, or otherwise limit God's Holy Spirit.

We have to trust, the detour is the road. No matter the detour our lives has taken in the past or right now, trust that God knows the why. Have hope in what you are learning and how you are becoming. Detours are not always easy or fun; they do not always make sense at the time, but as we see from the life of Peter and so many others of the early church, they are a part of our spiritual map.

Let us pray: Remind us once again, O Lord, you know the way, you know the why, and you know the when of this our walk of faith.

Now I can say I Live a Day" (John Wesley)

Pastor Pablo

May 13th, 2021