

U-TURNS

(Exodus 32: 7-14)

Intro: You have perhaps seen markers along:

- Highway.

- County road.

 - #Cross.

 - #Flowers.

 - #Shrine.

 - *Marking the spot where there has been a traffic fatality.

I once saw a marker on a curving mountain road.

- Dedicated:

 - #Not to a person.

 - *Who had died in a car accident.

 - #But to a mountain goat.

 - *It seems that a ram had been chasing a ewe.

 - +Down the mountain.

 - *Ram catapulted over the cliff to his death.

 - +Because he hadn't seen the ewe turn.

Today's Scripture lessons are about U-turns.

- Those who have gotten off of the Godly path.

- Those who are called to make a U-turn.

 - #To repent.

 - #To get back on the straight and narrow.

I. Consider The People Of Israel (Exodus 32: 7-14).

A. They Had Turned From The Godly Path.

1. They were camped at Mount Sinai.

a. Moses had disappeared up the mountain.

 - To receive the 10 Commandments.

b. Moses was gone a long time.

 - 40 days and 40 nights.

 - #Exodus 24: 18.

c. Some perhaps wondered if he was ever coming back.

2. What did the People of Israel do while Moses was gone?
 - a. They took up a collection.
 - Gold ear rings.
 - #Israelites had taken from the Egyptians.
 - *On their way out of Egypt.
 - b. They had Moses' brother Aaron make them into a golden calf.
 - They worshiped it.
 - They sacrificed to it.
 - #Exodus 32:1-6.

B. What Did God Do When He Saw What Had Happened?

1. God said to Moses:
 - a. "You had better get down there right away."
 - b. "Your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt,"
 - "Have been quick to turn aside from the way"
 - # "That I commanded them."
2. God called them "stiff-necked" people.
 - a. My dad has a stiff neck.
 - 10 days ago my dad fell at the Living Center.
 - #He hurt his neck.
 - #But he didn't tell any of the staff.
 - #He was so proud of himself.
 - *That he could pick himself up.
 - +Without asking for help.
 - +Without anybody knowing.
 - That afternoon.
 - #He called my sister.
 - *Complaining that his neck hurt.
 - #She hauled him into the emergency room.
 - *X-rays showed:
 - +Lot of arthritis.
 - +But no broken bones.
 - *Diagnosis was a sprained neck.
 - Hospital was ready to send him back to the Living Center.
 - #He didn't want to go.
 - *Like I said:
 - +He has a stiff neck.
 - #Doctors told him that they couldn't keep him.
 - *There was no medical reason.
 - +For him to be in the hospital.
 - #While he was waiting to be discharged.
 - *He started having breathing problems.
 - +Even on oxygen.
 - =His O₂ levels were low.

- #So the hospital did another test.
 - *They determined that my dad had fluid on his lungs.
 - +Consequence of his congestive heart failure.
- #So they did keep him.
 - *First overnight.
 - *Then for 5-6 days.
 - +To remove the fluid from his lungs.
- #Now he's at a rehab center.
 - *Receiving:
 - +Physical therapy.
 - +Occupational therapy.
 - *To get him ready to go back to the Living Center.
 - +Even though it sounds like he doesn't want to go.
 - =He has a stiff neck.
- b. Have you ever had a stiff neck?
 - Stiff neck.
 - #Prevents you from listening better.
 - *Because you don't turn your ear to be more attentive.
 - Stiff neck.
 - #Makes it hard for you to do a U-turn.
 - When I'm on my bike.
 - #If I'm overtaking:
 - *Other riders.
 - *Pedestrians.
 - +Who are walking 3 or 4 abreast.
 - #I'll say something like:
 - *"On your left."
 - *"Passing on your left."
 - +To communicate:
 - = "Move over."
 - = "Share the road."
 - = "Coming through."
 - #But I never say that to the little kids on their bikes.
 - *Do you know why?
 - *I've learned the hard way.
 - +If I say to a little kid:
 - = "On your left."
 - +Kids invariably turn their head.
 - =To look at me.
 - +When they turn their head.
 - =That's not all they turn.
 - =They also turn their handle bars.
 - Pretty soon we are on a collision course.
 - #Very thing I wish to avoid.

- Stiff-necked people don't turn their heads.
 - #To listen.
 - #To look.
 - #To change course.
 - #To repent.
 - #To make a U-turn.
- 3. God did not tell the Israelites to make a U-turn.
 - a. He didn't tell them:
 - To get rid of the golden calf.
 - To turn back to him.
 - b. Instead he burned with anger.
 - Anger enough to want to destroy them.
 - c. He said to Moses:
 - “Let me alone.”
 - #“So that my wrath may burn hot against them.”
 - #“And I may consume them.”
 - *Exodus 32: 10.
 - Have you ever been that mad?
 - #So mad that you didn't want anyone to say to you:
 - *“Time out.”
 - *“Take a breath.”
 - *“Take a break.”
 - *“Take a walk around the block.”
 - *“Count to ten.”
 - #You just wanted:
 - *To be left alone.
 - *To be allowed to be mad.
 - God just wanted to be mad.
 - #To destroy them.
 - #To say to Moses:
 - *“I will make of you a great nation.”
 - +Exodus 32: 10.
 - *That's the same promise God had made to:
 - +Abraham.
 - =Genesis 12:2.
 - +Isaac.
 - +Jacob.
 - =Whose name is changed to Israel.
 - +Israel's descendants.
 - =Children of Israel.
 - #God is so mad.
 - *He wants:
 - +To wipe them all out.
 - +To start all over with Moses.

C. What Did Moses Do?

1. Did he get on the case of the Israelites?
 - a. Tell them:
 - To limber up their necks.
 - To listen up.
 - #God was really ticked.
 - #They had better change their ways.
 - *Make a U-turn
 - +Or they were going to get it.
 - b. Not at all.
2. Instead Moses challenged God to repent.
 - a. To turn away from his anger.
 - b. To change his mind about destroying God's people.
 - Hebrew word.
 - #*Nacham*.
 - #Means to repent.
 - *30 out of the 35 times it's used in the Old Testament.
 - +It applies to God.
 - Moses called on God:
 - #To listen up.
 - #To limber up his neck.
 - #To do a U-turn.
 - Why?
 - #Moses said to God:
 - *"Because you promised."
 - *"Above everything else."
 - + "You are a God: "
 - = "Of promise."
 - = "Of mercy."
 - = "Of grace."
 - = "Of forgiveness."
 - What happened?
 - #God did a U-turn.
 - #God repented.
 - #God changed his mind.
 - #God did not bring disaster on God's people.
 - When God repents.
 - #It is not because God is fickle.
 - *Unpredictable.
 - #It is because God is predictable.
 - *To be merciful and keep his promises.
 - When God repents.
 - #It is to show us how God truly is.
 - #It is to empower us to become the people we were meant to be.

II. Consider St. Paul (1 Timothy 1:12-17).

A. Not Always A Saint.

1. He calls himself:
 - a. Blasphemer.
 - b. Persecutor.
 - c. Man of violence.
 - d. Ignorant.
 - e. Disbelieving.
2. Kind of person where God might wish to be left alone.
 - a. To burn with anger.
 - b. To destroy.

B. But God Made Paul The Person He Was Meant To Be.

1. Example to those who would come to believe in him (Jesus) for eternal life.
 - a. 1 Timothy 1:16.
2. Why? How?
 - a. Because Paul did a U-turn?
 - Got his act together.
 - No.
 - b. Because God is:
 - Merciful.
 - Gracious.
 - c. Because Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
 - God turned Paul's life around.
 - #To turn the chief persecutor in the early church.
 - *Into the chief missionary.

III. Christ Jesus Came Into The World To Save Sinners.

A. To Take The Heavenly Father's Burning, Destroying Anger.

1. Against:
 - a. Wayward.
 - b. Stiff-necked.
 - Sinners.
 - #Like you and me.
2. Upon himself.
 - a. To the cross.
 - b. To the grave.

B. On Easter Morning To Do The Biggest U-Turn Ever.

1. To turn:
 - a. Death into life.
 - b. Crucifixion into resurrection.
 - c. Anger into mercy.
 - d. Fear into faith.
 - e. Sinners into saints.
2. To turn our stiff necks around.
 - a. To hear.
 - That we are loved.
 - b. To see.
 - That we are forgiven.
 - c. To taste.
 - Our redemption.
 - #In bread and wine.
3. To turn us around.
 - a. To become the people we were created to be.
 - b. To welcome sinners and eat with them.
 - c. To rejoice when lost lambs are found.
 - Rams.
 - Ewes.
 - d. To trust that God always keeps God's promises.

Concl: So don't be like that mountain goat.

Keep your eyes open.

Keep your hearts open.

-So that you can see the U-turn.