

FORKS IN THE ROAD

(Luke 9:51-62)

Intro: Yogi Berra.

-Hall of Fame catcher.

#With the New York Yankees.

-Homespun philosopher.

#Is said to have uttered the following piece of wisdom:

*"If you come to a fork in the road, you should take it."

I. Jesus Had Come To A Fork In The Road.

A. His Earthly Ministry Was Headed Toward Its Climax.

1. "The days drew near for him to be taken up."

a. Luke 9:51.

b. Taken up:

-In death.

#On the cross.

-In resurrection.

#From the grave.

-Into heaven.

#Through his ascension.

2. Jesus had a choice.

a. To run away from that.

-To stay in the relative safety.

#Of Galilee.

b. To embrace the fate.

-Awaited him in Jerusalem.

3. Jesus had come to a fork in the road.

a. He had come to a cross road.

-Literally.

B. Jesus Set His Face To Go To Jerusalem.

1. One of the translations I read this week said:

a. "He stiffened his face."

b. One of the pictures that comes to mind.

-One of our national landmarks.

-Mount Rushmore.

#In the Black Hills.

*Of South Dakota.

- #Faces of those four presidents.
 - *George Washington.
 - *Thomas Jefferson.
 - *Teddy Roosevelt.
 - *Abraham Lincoln.
- #Carved in granite.
 - *Looking neither to the left or the right.
- c. Jesus had his eyes fixed on Jerusalem.
- 2. But Jesus soon came to another fork in the road.
 - a. It was in Samaria.
 - Samaria was the land between:
 - #Galilee.
 - *In the north.
 - #Judea.
 - *In the south.
 - Samaritans were not blue-blooded Jews.
 - #Brief Old Testament history lesson.
 - *When Israel got a king.
 - + There was a united monarchy under only three kings.
 - =Saul.
 - =David.
 - =Solomon.
 - *After Solomon's death.
 - + There was a civil war.
 - + Country was divided between North and South.
 - =Israel.
 - In the north.
 - =Judah.
 - In the south.
 - *Northern kingdom of Israel.
 - + Overrun by the Assyrians.
 - =722 B.C.
 - +Assyrians controlled their conquests.
 - =By moving people around.
 - Some Israelites.
 - #Moved into other conquered lands.
 - Some folks from other conquered territories.
 - #Moved into what had been Israel.
 - +Result was an intermingling of:
 - =People.
 - =Races.
 - =Cultures.
 - +There was intermarrying.
 - =Offspring of those marriages were the Samaritans.

- #Samaritans and Jews didn't get along very well.
- *Which is what makes the story of the Good Samaritan.
 - +So powerful.
 - =Luke 10:29-37.
 - Gospel for two weeks from today.
- *Full-blooded Jews saw them as:
 - +Half breeds.
 - +Religious perverts.
- *Samaritans had their own holy site.
 - +Mount Gerizim.
 - =John 4:19-20.
- *Samaritans didn't welcome Jews.
 - +From Galilee.
 - +Who were on religious pilgrimage.
 - =To Jerusalem.

b. Jesus sent an advance team to get things ready for him.
 -The President does that.

- #When I was in graduate school.
- *Luther Seminary.
 - +In St. Paul, Minnesota.
- *Hubert Humphrey died.
 - +Vice President under Lyndon Johnson.
 - =1965-1969.
 - +Later was re-elected to the Senate.
 - =He was a U.S. Senator when he died.
 - January 13, 1978.
 - +His funeral or memorial service.
 - =Macalester College.
- *Then-President Jimmy Carter attended the funeral.
- #I lived in a 24-story high-rise apartment building.
- *In the Midway area of St. Paul.
 - +In the days before the funeral.
 - =There was a Secret Service detail in our building.
 - Setting up a communications system.
 - #On the roof of our building.
 - This was in the days before:
 - #Cell phones.
 - #Satellite links.
 - So that there could be a communications link between:
 - #Washington, D.C.
 - #Air Force One.
 - #Roof of our building.
 - #Presidential limousine.

- Jesus sent an advance team into a Samaritan village.
 - #But they were not welcomed there.
 - #Two of Jesus' disciples.
 - *James.
 - *John.
 - +Two brothers.
 - +Sons of Zebedee.
 - =In Mark 3:17 called:
 - Sons of Thunder.
 - +Wanted to:
 - =Rumble.
 - =Celebrate the 4th of July early.
 - =Call in the cruise missiles.
 - =Blast those Samaritans off the face of the earth.
- c. Jesus was at a fork in the road.
 - Draw a line in the sand in Samaria.
 - #Punish the Samaritans with overwhelming air power.
 - #Teach them a lesson in hospitality.
 - Demonstrate that the Kingdom of God.
 - #Not established by force of arms.
 - #But is a matter of:
 - *Sacrifice.
 - *Suffering.
 - *Faithfulness.
 - *Obedience.
- d. Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.

II. What Forks In The Road Do We Face?

A. There Are Many.

1. Founding Fathers of our country had to make a choice.
 - a. Remain loyal subjects of King George.
 - b. Become FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES.
 - With our 4th of July holiday this week.
 - You know which fork in the road they chose.
 - #For themselves.
 - #For us.
 - *Toward that end they pledged their:
 - +Lives.
 - +Fortunes.
 - +Sacred honor.

2. We have a choice about how we deal with conflict.
 - a. James and John wanted to call in the heavy artillery.
 - That's often a tempting choice.
 - #To try to settle our problems with force.
 - b. But there is another way.
 - My son Joel attended a fight-free school.
 - #For three years.
 - Students were taught conflict resolution skills.
 - #Talk it out.
 - #Involve a teacher/third party.
 - #Walk away.
 - In front of their school was a flag pole.
 - #At the top.
 - *American flag.
 - #Underneath.
 - *Fight-free flag.
 - +Flew every week there were no fights.
 - *Flag never came down.
 - +Whole three years Joel was in that school.
 - =There were no fights.
 - c. But when I talked about conflict resolution skills at the jail.
 - Talk it out.
 - Involve a third party.
 - #Another inmate.
 - #Correctional officer.
 - #Social worker.
 - Walk away.
 - #I might as well have been speaking Greek.
 - *"What do you mean, walk away?"
 - *"You never walk away."
 - *"That's a sign of weakness."
 - *"You can't let people think you're weak."
 - d. Jesus walked away.
 - Not because he was weak.
 - But because:
 - #He was:
 - *Faithful.
 - *Obedient.
 - +To his Heavenly Father.
 - #He had set his face to go to Jerusalem.
 - e. Which fork in the road will we take?

3. We have a choice to make when Jesus invites us to come and follow.
 - a. We can say:
 - “Yes, but . . .”
 - “You know, I’d really like to.”
 - #“But this isn’t really a good time for me right now.”
 - “I sometimes have to work on Sundays.”
 - “My mother is in a nursing home.”
 - “My husband likes to play golf.”
 - “My kids have soccer games.”
 - “Maybe some other time.”
 - b. Or we can say:
 - “Jerusalem, huh?”
 - “In spite of its name, I’ve heard that’s a pretty rough place.”
 - #“Jerusalem” means “foundation of peace.”
 - “I know the road between here and there is awfully bumpy.”
 - “But if that’s where you want me to go,”
 - “And if you’re going to lead the way,”
 - “I’m with you.”
 - c. Which fork in the road will we take?
4. We have a choice to make when Jesus calls us to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God.
 - a. We can say:
 - “I don’t really like to talk about religion.”
 - “My faith is very personal.”
 - “I don’t want to get into any arguments with anybody.”
 - b. Or we can say:
 - “I wonder how I can let my light of faith shine before others?”
 - “I can say grace over my meal in a public restaurant.”
 - “I can visit a friend in the hospital and pray with them.”
 - “I can give away one of the stones I got from the baptismal font.”
 - “I can pass on my Sunday bulletin.”
 - #“It has Scripture readings and prayers in it.”
 - c. Which fork in the road will we take?

B. We Always Have A Choice And We Sometimes Get A Second Chance.

1. Samaritans got a second chance.
 - a. We have to read into Volume 2 of Luke-Acts.
 - To get the rest of the story.
 - b. Acts 8:4-25.
 - Philip goes to Samaria to preach the Gospel.
 - Then Peter and John—another chance for John in Samaria.
 - #Samaritans.
 - *Received the Holy Spirit.
 - *Were baptized.

2. When I was a hospital chaplain.
 - a. I didn't sit in the office much.
 - Waiting for the phone to ring.
 - Waiting for someone to request my services.
 - #I would have accumulated a lot of dust.
 - b. I went:
 - On every floor.
 - Into every room.
 - To visit every patient.
 - c. Most would welcome me.
 - d. But there were a few who didn't want to be bothered.
 - More than once I was told:
 - #"Go to hell."
 - Do you know what I would do?
 - #I didn't go to hell.
 - #I would leave them alone.
 - *I understood that people:
 - +Weren't feeling well.
 - +Were having a bad day.
 - #But I always went back another day.
 - *I always gave people at least three opportunities.
 - +To tell me to take a hike.
 - =Few might do that.
 - *But most would welcome me back.
 - +When they were feeling better.
 - e. Even when we have come to a certain fork in the road in the past.
 - We may come to that same fork in the road again.
 - #Each time we have a choice.
 - *Will I go to this room?
 - *Will I speak with this person?
 - #Each time we do.
 - *That other person is also at a fork in the road.
 - +We can't assume that the choice they made before.
 - =Same choice they will make this time.
3. When I was a jail chaplain.
 - a. One of the inmates.
 - Told me he was Jewish.
 - Asked me if I would get him a Jewish prayer book.
 - #That didn't happen often.
 - *We didn't have that many Jewish inmates.
 - +But if an inmate asked me for a Jewish prayer book.
 - =I'd get them a Jewish prayer book.
 - +If someone asked me for a Book of Mormon.
 - =I'd get them a Book of Mormon.

- b. Every time I saw this inmate.
 - I would speak with him.
 - I would ask him:
 - #What he was reading.
 - #What he was learning.
- c. One day he came to my Bible class.
 - He stayed behind at the end of the group.
 - He said:
 - #"I need to talk to you."
 - I said:
 - #"OK, what's going on?"
 - He said:
 - #"I have a confession to make."
 - #"Remember when I came into the jail?"
 - *"And I told you that I was Jewish?"
 - *"And I asked you to get me a Jewish prayer book?"
 - I said:
 - #"Yeah, I remember."
 - #"I got you the book."
 - *"It wasn't easy."
 - *"But I got you the book."
 - He said:
 - #"You can have the book back."
 - #"I'm not really Jewish."
 - #"I just told you that."
 - *"Because I didn't want to be bothered with what you had to say."
 - #"But you've always treated me with kindness and respect."
 - #"Now I do want to hear what you have to say."
 - #"I'm going to be coming to Bible study from now on."
 - He did.
 - #Every day.
 - *Fork in the road for us.
 - #Every person we meet.
 - *Fork in the road for us.
 - *We become a fork in the road for them.

Concl: Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.
 -He chose the fork of:
 #Suffering.
 #Sacrifice.
 #Faithfulness.
 #Obedience.

-Now our:

#Crucified.

#Resurrected.

#Ascended.

#Ever-present.

*Lord.

-Brings the fork in the road to us.

#At the fork there is:

*Bread.

*Wine.

+Forgiveness.

+Another chance.

#As Yogi Berra would say:

*"If you come to a fork in the road, you should take it."