

ARE WE THERE YET?

(Philippians 3: 4b-14)

Intro: Are we there yet?

- Comes the cry from the back seat.
 - #When our impatient and bored passengers.
 - *Wonder if we'll ever get where we're going.

Are we there yet?

- Comes the cry from confirmands.
 - #When they wonder if their course of study and preparation.
 - *Will ever lead to Confirmation.

Are we there yet?

- Comes the cry from students.
 - #When they wonder if there will ever be an end to:
 - *Homework.
 - *Papers.
 - *Projects.
 - +This after a week of spring break.

Are we there yet?

- Comes the cry from working folks.
 - #When they wonder if they will ever be able to retire.

Are we there yet?

- Comes the cry from those with health issues.
 - #When they wonder if there is any cure for what ails them.

Are we there yet?

- Comes the cry from the elderly.
 - #When they wonder how much longer until God calls them home.

Are we there yet?

- Comes the cry from the Church Council.
 - #When we wonder:
 - *If we've picked up all the pieces from the past.
 - *If our membership numbers will increase.
 - *If our giving patterns will improve.

Are we there yet?

-Comes the cry from the pews.

#When our Lenten journey seems to drag on and on.

*With no alleluias.

*With portions of the liturgy that are not so familiar.

+How long ago was it?

=Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.

-Luke 9:51.

Are we there yet?

I. The Answer Is: "No, We're Not There Yet."

A. That Was St. Paul's Answer In Philippians 3.

1. "I do not claim that I have already arrived."
 - a. "That I have already become perfect."
 - b. "That I have already reached the goal."
 - c. "I keep striving to win the prize that lies ahead."
-Philippians 3:12-14.
2. The Christian faith.
 - a. More of a process.
-Than a product.
 - b. More of a journey.
-Than a destination.
3. Early Christians.
 - a. Sometimes called people of the Way.
 - b. Book of Acts.
-9:2.
4. Jesus said of himself.
 - a. "I am the Way."
 - b. John 14:6.
5. We are on the way.
 - a. But we're not there yet.

B. Paul Used The Imagery Of A Race.

1. Race of faith.
 - a. More like a marathon.
 - b. Than a 100-yard dash.
2. What's important.
 - a. Not:
-That I beat you.
-You beat me.
 - b. But that we finish and be faithful to the end.

3. When I ran track in high school.
 - a. It's still true today.
 - b. One of the cardinal rules of running.
 - Don't look back.
 - #Not only because of Satchel Paige's sage advice:
 - *Someone might be gainin' on you.
 - #But because you can't run this way.
 - *If you're looking that way.
 - When I ran track.
 - #There were no synthetic or rubberized tracks.
 - *Well, actually there was one.
 - +I got to run on.
 - =At the state track meet.
 - #We ran on cinder tracks.
 - *If you weren't paying attention.
 - *If you weren't watching where you were going.
 - *If you tripped and fell.
 - +Your knees.
 - +Palms of your hands.
 - =Would be bloody.
 - =Would be filled with cinder shrapnel.
4. Paul's advice.
 - a. Forget what is behind.
 - Philippians 3: 13.
 - It's all rubbish.
 - #Philippians 3:8.
 - b. Paul had a lot to leave behind.
 - His status and accomplishments.
 - #Circumcised on the eighth day.
 - #Member of the people of Israel.
 - #Of the tribe of Benjamin.
 - #Hebrew born of Hebrews.
 - #Pharisee.
 - #Persecutor of the church.
 - *Which at one time he considered to be a badge of honor.
 - #Blameless under the law.
 - It's all rubbish.

- c. We have our own rubbish.
 - MVP medal from high school track.
#Rubbish.
 - Outstanding scholar-athlete trophy.
#Rubbish.
 - Master of Divinity degree.
#Rubbish.
 - Master of Theology degree.
#Rubbish.
- d. If our earthly honors and accolades are all rubbish.
 - What is our sin?
#That is really rubbish.
*Excess baggage.
+Needs to be left behind.
- 5. Only thing that's truly important in the race of faith.
 - a. Knowing Christ Jesus as your Lord.
-Philippians 3: 8.
 - b. Being faithful.
-Philippians 3: 9.
 - c. Keeping your eyes on the prize.
-Philippians 3: 14.

II. Even With Our Eyes On The Prize, The Road Can Get Awfully Rough.

A. Just Ask My Wife Pam.

- 1. Couple of weeks ago.
 - a. We went out to dinner.
 - b. To celebrate my birthday.
- 2. In the wee hours of the following morning.
 - a. Pam woke me up.
 - b. She said:
 - “I woke up with this terrible pain and nausea.”
 - “I’ve called my doctor.”
 - “He wants me to go to the emergency room.”
 - c. I said:
 - “You mean now?”
 - d. She said:
 - “Yes, now!”
 - e. So I got up and got dressed.

3. We were driving up Lewis.
 - a. At 2:30 in the morning.
 - b. On our way to St. John's Hospital.
 - c. There wasn't much traffic.
 - But all of the traffic lights seemed to be red.
 - #Don't traffic lights in this town ever flash?
 - *In the middle of the night.
 - Pam kept saying:
 - #"Hurry!"
 - She couldn't understand why we weren't there yet.
 - d. One of the reasons we weren't there yet.
 - Streets in this town are so rough.
 - #Bike paths are in better shape.
 - First I was in one lane.
 - #Then I tried the other lane.
 - If it was a rough ride for me.
 - #I can only imagine what it was like for Pam.
 - e. It's not just the Tulsa streets that can be rough.

B. Our Journey Of Faith Can Be Bumpy.

1. We each have our own bumps in the road.
 - a. Health issues.
 - b. Financial difficulties.
 - c. Family struggles.
 - d. Challenges at work.
 - Lack of work.
 - e. Crime in our community.
 - f. Violence in our world.
2. We cry out from the back seat.
 - a. "Are we there yet?"
 - b. "Lord, can't you drive faster?"
 - c. "Lord, can't you find a smoother road?"

III. Lord's Road Is The Way Of The Cross.

A. That's Not An Easy Road.

1. Jesus had to endure not only the physical ordeal.
 - a. Whip lashes.
 - Across his back.
 - b. Crown of thorns.
 - On his head.
 - c. Nails.
 - In his hands.
 - In his feet.

2. He had to carry the burden of our sin.
 - a. If St. Paul calls our human honors and accolades "rubbish."
 - Isn't our sin also rubbish?
 - b. Can you imagine carrying the weight of the world's sin?
 - Ten days ago.
 - #Someone dumped a load of trash on our property.
 - *Carpeting.
 - *Lumber.
 - *Tires.
 - *Junk.
 - #Dave Imwalle was nice enough to clean that up for us.
 - *To put the garbage in the dumpster.
 - #That was one person's trash.
 - In March 1998.
 - #St. Louis County, Missouri opened a new jail.
 - *State of the art.
 - +\$110 million.
 - +1232 beds.
 - #First day in the new facility.
 - *I spent the morning unpacking.
 - *In the afternoon I went back to the old jail.
 - +Doors were standing wide open.
 - +I was looking for Bibles.
 - =In good condition.
 - =That had been left behind.
 - I found quite a few.
 - +I also found piles and piles of trash.
 - =Knee deep.
 - =Thigh high.
 - Left by:
 - #Inmates.
 - #Staff.
 - #I don't know who had to clean up that mess.
 - *Probably inmates on work release.
3. Jesus is the garbage collector.
 - a. Taking upon himself:
 - Sin.
 - Garbage.
 - #Not just of:
 - *One person.
 - *Jail full of people.
 - #But of the whole world.

- b. Taking it to the cross.
- c. Taking it to the grave.
 - Burying it.
 - #That's what we do with garbage, isn't it?
 - *We bury it.
- d. So that when Jesus is raised from the dead on Easter morning.
 - Garbage is left behind.
 - #Sin is forgiven.
 - #We have the promise:
 - *New life.
 - *Eternal life.

B. But We're Not There Yet.

- 1. We're still on the way.
- 2. One of my pet peeves.
 - a. When I worked in the jail.
 - b. All of people who used the phrase:
 - "I got saved."
 - c. I understood what they meant.
 - They wanted to identify:
 - #Time.
 - #Place.
 - *At which they openly professed their faith.
 - *They recommitted themselves to the life of Christ.
 - d. What was my problem with that expression?
 - First, it's the "I."
 - #I got saved.
 - *As though this is an individual accomplishment.
 - *Rather than a gift from God.
 - + In Jesus Christ.
 - Secondly, it's past tense.
 - #I got saved.
 - *As though it's all over and done with.
 - + It's all over and done with.
 - = On God's end of things.
 - = On the cross Jesus said:
 - "It is finished."
 - #John 19: 30.
 - Nothing more needs to be done.
 - + On our end of things.
 - = It's not finished.
 - = We can't claim:
 - "I've already arrived."
 - "I've already got it made."

Concl: We are not there yet.

We are on the way.

-Yes, sometimes the road is rough.

Healing Words.

-Devotional book for people who are hospitalized.

-Published by Creative Communications for the Parish.

#In St. Louis.

-Back pages.

#"Chat with the Chaplain."

*Over the years I've written 35-40 of these.

-But what's often most entertaining.

#Charlie Brown cartoon in the front.

*One of those from several years ago.

+Charlie Brown says to his little friend Linus:

= "I wonder why it happens . . ."

= "Just when you think everything is perfect,"

= "Life deals you a blow!"

+Linus says:

= "I know what you mean . . ."

= "Maybe we should all wear batting helmets!"

God doesn't give us batting helmets.

God gives us:

#Word of forgiveness.

*So we can leave the rubbish of the past behind.

#Bread and wine.

*Food for the journey.

=Because we're not there yet.