

“Journey” February 18, 2018, Genesis 9:8-17, Psalm 25:1-10, 1 Peter 3:18-22, Mark 1:9-15

Matthew 4:3-9 (The Message)

“Since you are God’s Son, speak the word that will turn these stones into food.” “Since you are God’s Son, jump. He has placed you in the care of angels. ‘They will catch you so that you won’t so much as stub your toe on a stone.’” “...The tempter gestured expansively, pointing out all the earth’s kingdoms, how glorious they all were. ‘They’re yours, lock, stock and barrel. Just go down on your knees and worship me, they’re yours.’”

Jesus Christ is more than the one who died on the cross, and whom God raised from the dead as a sign of unlimited grace, unmerited favor and victory over death. Jesus Christ is also our living model for life. It is his life, his death and his resurrection, whereby we are enabled to live life in all its fullness.

The Psalmist prays:

25:4-5 Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me,

[picture change]

That prayer is answered in Jesus Christ. Through Christ we are given knowledge of God’s ways and

we are led into God's truth. Through Christ we learn to experience God's presence, power and joy.

Through faith, we know God's spirit through Christ.

And Mark informs us that Jesus, after baptism:

1:12-13... the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

[picture change]

We are obliged by the Spirit of God, yes by God's thinking and direction, to engage our wilderness. No one wants to go into the wilderness. As Jesus faced his ordeal he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Lord if you are willing, let me not experience the pain, the hurt, the loneliness, the suffering and the death of this place where I am being directed."

The more we pray, the more we seek God's face, the more we are guided by God's word and by the prompting, urging and witness of God's Spirit in us,

the more we come to appreciate the fact, that what lies before us as disciples of Christ, is not an appealing path. it requires us, as Watchman Nee articulated to his underground Chinese disciples of Jesus Christ, to live “against the tide.”

[picture change]

Command these stones to be made bread. Living against the tide means that bread, my daily needs and provisions on the journey, cannot be my preoccupation. The pursuit of riches can no longer be my priority. That is clearly living against the tide.

“So, you believe that God’s angels are here protecting you, setting things up for you that you haven’t even thought of, ready to save you if you dash your foot against a stone, ‘Then throw yourself down.’” Commit rash acts and demand miraculous signs from God to prove that he is there with you. But the Spirit convinces us that this is a foolish

expectation, because it means that we would be guiding God, rather than God guiding us, and hence God's sovereignty and protection would become meaningless.

[picture change]

So, we must live against the tide on Christ's journey and call upon family, friends, neighbors and coworkers to believe where no proof exists at all. Our journey is always going against the tide and calling others to journey to life with us. This is the only way that we and they will ever begin to experience God's reality in Christ for themselves. And daily, you will ask, "Why me? Why should I journey against the tide? Why should I live by faith and the values set forth in God's living Word in me, when others are living by hook and crook? We will get weary and be tempted to throw in the towel. We will hear the temptation, "Stop this God-faith foolishness and live by the principles of dog-eat-dog,

step over the weak that we might obtain the prestige, power, wealth and importance that life can give us. But the presence of Christ will again and again remind us as the Spirit reminded Jesus in his temptation, "Worship the Lord your God and only him. Serve him with absolute single-heartedness."

On the journey of life as we follow Christ, we will hear the call to live against the tide, and we will find strength to do so. It is a call that is necessary as we to hear as we follow Christ's journey in this life.

When that becomes our daily practice, then our journey is already complete.

Life is like a mountain railroad, with an engineer that's brave
You must make the run successful, from the cradle to the grave.
Watch the curves the fills, the tunnels, never falter, never fail.
Keep your hand upon the throttle, and your eye upon the rail.

Blessed savior, thou will guide us
Till we reach, that blissful shore
Where the angels wait to join us
In thy praise, for ever more.
AMEN.