

January 15th Sermon

Listen to an American poet, and then to parts of our readings today. I suggest that you seek first what is shared, and second what is different:

The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost, 1915

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

...

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

The poet wrote this for his friend Thomas, with whom he frequently walked. In Frost's words, Thomas was "a person who, whichever road he went, would be sorry he didn't go the other. He was hard on himself that way." A ramble through the countryside, and life itself, has mystery and choices, and consequences.

[fun!] Choosing not to choose is a choice.

There really is no choice, we must choose - every day.

The poet is unclear whether the road less travelled was by some criteria better or worse, but it "made all the difference" - in a better journey? destination? both? I suspect that the traveller doesn't know. If he has no destination, no purpose, how could he even guess?

Now listen to Isaiah

The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away.

Isaiah focuses on his purpose, of the destination and the tools not the state of the road/comfort of the journey. Yes, an arrow can be a back scratcher, but the arrow is made for a singular purpose. Isaiah chooses to live his life as an arrow. His journey was almost certainly not the easiest or most scenic, but it was true to purpose.

and John's Gospel

When Jesus turned and saw [the disciples of John the Baptist] following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi", "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see."

Jesus invites them to [see] where/how he lives - not [listen] words only. I understand this as an invitation to experience and evaluate his actions. How direct and real [in-carne, in-flesh] is this! We are not told what the Andrew saw, but it was enough that

[Andrew] first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas"

- Cephas: Borrowed from [Ancient Greek Κηφᾶς](#) (Kēphâs), from [Aramaic כִּפְיָא](#) (kēpā, "stone, rock").
- *(which we translate as **Peter**)*

Jesus did more than rename Simon - he recognized him and gave him his life purpose [*on this rock I will build my church*] at the very start of their relationship, very much as Isaiah spoke of being recognized and receiving purpose from God 'while in my mother's womb'.

What can this mean?

Do all of us have a God-given purpose from our beginning? I suspect so.

Do all of us know our God-given purpose throughout our lives? I didn't, so not everyone. you decide about yourself and those you love.

Does our God-given purpose come to us full and clear? I suspect for some it does. For me, realization started late, and is gradual.

Is our God-given purpose the same for each of us? Each of us is a part of the rainbow, and none of us is the whole rainbow. I suspect that our purpose will always be given and fulfilled in community, some form of service beyond ourself.

The foundation of the community is long term relationships based on the infinite worth of each member. It is not transactional - best offer

If we fulfil our God-given purpose, will we be rich and comfortable? Oh oh... both John the Baptist and Simon Peter were sent to prison and executed by their government ! Neither John nor Peter expressed regret with their purpose, though Peter was "led to where he did not want to go" [his place of execution].

I suspect that with fulfilled purpose we will be spiritually rich - but maybe not financially rich and physically comfortable.

The peace that surpasses all understanding is priceless

- everything has a price? Elon Musk & all the billionaires cannot buy a sunset or a baby's smile. None of us can buy what is not for sale

Everyone is offered the peace that surpasses all understanding !

- for this and more come as a gift for those who strive to serve their God-given purpose
- only as a gift. Never bought. Never sold.

May we find and fulfill our purpose.

May this gift of peace come to you and to me.