

From the Gospel reading this morning it's evident that Jesus can see that his message of love and radical boundary breaking wasn't appealing to the government or to the religious leaders.

So he tries to tell the disciples what he foresees as the end game: arrest, death—but he assures them that he has never been more serious about his commitment to showing everyone God's healing and boundless love—--and though it probably won't end well, he reiterates that only love builds the kingdom of God.

Earlier this summer, as you recall, Jesus had sent the disciples out to proclaim the kingdom and love of God and to heal.

They were excited about taking up the mantle of following Jesus—but still they argued with him about being careful—being safe. And Peter must have been very outspoken about it, because this morning- Jesus rebukes him.

I just bet he did. All this talk about loving God and neighbor, healing those who needed it, forgiving sins, building the Kingdom—following him--and still the message hadn't sunk in. Love is more important than being safe.

He must have been thinking—how can I make them realize we are all one, and love is the only answer to life's questions; this—this, dear disciples is the only way to bring about the world God has in mind. And we have to stop acting like we're *right* and start acting like we *love*. **We all are going in the same direction.**

When I was with a church group, touring cathedrals in England a couple of years ago, I sat at the front of our enormous bus and watched our driver- Colin- navigate with finesse around countless traffic circles, down narrow lanes, and patiently wait while other drivers had the right of way.

We all told Colin how we were inspired by his acumen behind the wheel.

He said, "You just have to realize we're all going down the road together, and we'll all get there eventually."

One day, this largish van next to us kept drifting into our lane. It would move back into its own lane briefly, then drive into our lane again. Finally Colin honked politely.

Then he turned to me and smiled and said, "Oh, and it helps if people pick a lane. "

So true. When we pick up our crosses and follow Jesus, we *pick Jesus' lane*, and we don't make excuses when we drift... We're all so good at excuses. Our good intent is there, but our follow through is sometimes lacking.

I'll do that Jesus, but FIRST I need to...do these *really important* things. I'm willing to love my neighbor, Lord, love even my enemies, AFTER we take care of the things and people that make us uncomfortable. I will. I promise.

I promise, Lord, to follow your way of forgiveness and respect- - *after* my career really gets going, *after* I shoot off this nasty email, *after* I derail this democrat or that republican, *after* things turn around in this country, this continent, this world.

I really **have** to do these things first -- and after I do these things, I promise I really will follow you and walk in love.

But Love won't wait. The world is falling apart while we put love on hold.

Love *sounds* all peaceful and full of hope—but in reality choosing love is hard, and it means we can never say we've finished. Now we can rest. Everything's wonderful. We don't have to love everybody anymore.

I think it'll be a long time before we've built the kingdom up that much. Meanwhile, it's so easy to wander off the path of love, drift into other lanes.

And here's the thing-- Jesus is always ready to forgive our errors of judgment, our moments of distraction, our bad spiritual driving. But the truth is: Jesus has asked us to follow him onto the hardest path of all. It really does matter where our focus is. Which direction we're going in.

Our guide on that same trip to England, Nick, a great huge Englishman, probably 6'5", 220 pounds of laughing eyes and booming voice, taught us all about direction.

"Good people," he would say, "Good people—I shall teach you how to use the underground"—that's the subway for all us non-Brits... "There are really only 3 things you ever need to know to find your way," he would say, "but they are important."

"Good people:

- Know where you are:
- Know where you're going.
- Know which direction you need to go in. That is all."

"Take up your cross," Jesus invites us, "and *follow me.*"

Whether we're navigating our lives, finding our way home on the underground, or following Jesus's way of love--it really does matter where our focus is.

Good people---we just need to:

- know where we are.
- Know where we're going.
- Know which direction we need to go in.

Jesus says, pick a lane, and follow me. Amen.