

Today's Gospel says:

*'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'*

The WAY of the Lord. Paths. These are metaphors used throughout the bible to describe our journey with God. A little secret here: I believe that ALL paths will eventually lead to God. Since we believe God is everywhere and in everything, and there is no place where God is NOT—then I don't believe it's even possible to *not* be with God during our individual journeys, and I think God will never rest until everything and everyone finds its way back to him.

But within each of our lives we have choices to make. Choices about *which* paths we choose to take on this journey. Some paths are easier, some more challenging.

Speaking through the prophets Baruch and Isaiah, God assures us that that he could—and would-- make this journey easier for us—by filling valleys and lowering troublesome mountains, straightening out hairpin turns, and putting new blacktop on the roads that are filled with potholes and frost heaves. Of course God would like to do that—we are God's children.

We do the same thing with OUR children. We want to make their lives as wonderful, safe and unstressful as we can.

Does it work? I don't know—you tell me. It hasn't worked with my daughter so far. Despite my best efforts, she persists in climbing

dangerous mountains to get where she wants to go, and the hairpin turns she chooses—make my stomach clench and the hands go over my eyes. But it's her journey. Hers and Gods.

All of our paths are different. A path is merely a way or a track laid down by many feet wearing down the earth.

I asked the good people at the Wednesday healing service this week what images came to their minds when they thought about paths and journey's to God. What types of paths resonated with them?

One person described a superhighway—big--like 15 lanes that all of us are on in some way, shape, or form. It begins at birth and ends when we return to God. Some people are in the fastest lane—lane #15-- some are stopped in the breakdown lane, but there are places along the way to get nourishment, fix a flat, stop and rest.

Another pictures a mountain path, filled with adventure. Another saw a footpath in the woods, under the trees. I often think of a passage on a beach, flanked by the ocean of God...

What do you think of?

Think metaphorically—which is what this passage from Isaiah describes. Throughout our lives our journey to God brings us along many terrains, many climates.

And we have choices. Do you remember a time when your path of life had a choice of different ways to go? I remember several times when that happened, and I'm still being offered choices. I bet you are, too. And I bet we always will be.

Physicists have discovered that there are multiple realities that exist all around us *at the same time*. Scientists speculate that for each decision we make in this reality, other choices and other roads chosen are played out in other realities.

Sometimes I wish I could see all the different ways my life would have turned out had I made different decisions. But I am reminded of the passage in the Chronicles of Narnia, where Lucy makes a disastrous decision. She then asks Aslan to tell her what would have happened.

*"To know what would have happened, child?" said Aslan. "No. Nobody is ever told that."*

*"Oh dear," said Lucy.*

*"But anyone can find out what will happen," said Aslan.*

There's no going back in this life, but there is always a chance to go forward. We will pick the roads that resonate with us. We will make the choices. Some prefer mountains to climb. Others prefer the speed and directness of a superhighway. For many it's the mystery and quiet of the woods, and others thrive on a slow, mellow, sundrenched trail through the grass.

And we can always veer into the unknown or come back to the familiar. After all, it's our journey, our way to God.

And if we get lost or tired, God will fill up those valleys and bring down those self-imposed mountains. And whatever path we choose, God will be with us every step of the way.

"Prepare the way of the Lord...all flesh shall see the salvation of the God. " Amen.