

Living our lives is like a long and winding journey and, like all journeys, this will mean that we will face trials and tribulations. There will be wonder and there will be excitement. There will be risks and there will be conflict. But there is also a promise. The promise in everyone's life's journey is that we will be transformed.

We, as followers of Jesus, commit ourselves to following his example of extravagantly loving our neighbors as ourselves. As Paul says this morning, this is the single law we now all follow. We promise on our baptism and each week in church that in the following week, we will continue on that journey of love. This is our commitment.

We commit to this because we believe that this type of loving interaction with each other is the only way to happiness-- there are no other options open.

We are now living for something much bigger than ourselves. The meaning of life that we see is now only fulfilled by treating everyone as if they have worth, because Jesus has told us that everyone has worth.

But does everyone believe that? Does everyone really believe that they have worth in God's eyes and *each other's* eyes? Or do we sometimes say to ourselves:

- I'm not called by God.
- It doesn't really matter if I show up.
- No one will miss me.
- I do not have any real worth.
- I can't make a difference.

How can we commit to loving each other before we believe that we are loved? By willpower alone?

And what is the difference between willpower and commitment?

There once were two people. We'll call them Jewel and Will.

Jewel and Will would like to commit to eating better and losing weight.

Will is going to do it by relying on his willpower. He already knows what is good to eat and what is not. He feels he can convince himself that he really does not want that tuna melt, he instead wants chicken and vegetables. He wants to lose his excess weight, have less arthritis, regain more energy, and – let's be honest— he wants to look better. Will convinces himself that he has the willpower to do this.

So why is it not working?

Jewell, on the other hand, is also committed to eating better and losing weight. She has studied up on carbs and sugar. She checks in regularly with the doctor and finds supportive friends who have similar goals. Jewell eats better and loses weight.

Why is one person eating better, and the other is struggling? Jewell has recently found out she has diabetes. If she doesn't commit to this new eating plan, she will have a diminished lifespan and might even die.

Willpower is often what one turns to when they want to achieve personal and self-oriented goals.

Commitment is when we realize what we want isn't the end game. It's when we believe that without commitment to something bigger than we are—we won't be able to survive. To live in a complete way.

The early Christians used to refer to themselves as “The Way.” The author of the gospel of Luke was the first person to record this name for the early Christian movement. And it seems that by calling themselves “The Way,” the early church was saying something really important about who they were. This was not a static and settled community, an immovable structure that contained the absolute paradigm of the divine.

No, they referred to themselves as “The Way, “ implying that not only were they a people on the move, but they were a people who would discover their goals and destination only as they walked the path. Life, they thought, was a journey into developing the skills that Jesus had taught them. The skill to really SEE and LOVE each person they met on the way..

They understood their commitment to Jesus as a connection to something bigger that would give them the power to do things they never would have thought they could do. Imagine: being able to see Christ in everyone you meet?

And they couldn’t do it by will-power alone. They could only do it when they were committed to something bigger: committed to a more whole life. Committed to love and the joy that would bring into their lives.

As we read this morning, Jesus consistently encountered people who liked his message but couldn’t commit to following him. They were always finding that they needed to do one more thing before really committing to following the Way of Love. There will always things that were more important in the moment, even today.

Like, when we choose politics over Jesus’ way. Or when we choose the way of money and success over Jesus’ way. Sometimes we even put other people’s opinions before Jesus’ way.

This is normal in our world, because we all make decisions based on our own self-interests. We make many things more important than following Jesus’ command to love. Even when we really want to follow Jesus. Even when we are trying with all the power in our being.

This is because we have a tendency to rely on will power which fails, instead of committing to something bigger—which will never fail.

Paul reminds us that one great commandment is given to God’s people for this journey on the Way. And—as Father Rohr says: “*The great commandment is not “thou shalt be right.” The great commandment is to “be in love.”*”

Living our lives is a long and winding journey along the Way, and we can do this journey at our own pace and we can always call for help, re-commit. And here is Jesus’ promise: when we commit to this Way we will be transformed—in ways we can’t even yet fathom, by the power of love.

Amen