

Life journey Matthew 18: 15 – 20, Romans 13: 8- 14, Exodus 12: 1- 14

We say that life is a journey, a journey to an unknown place, especially for a life of faith. This faithful journey is one that involves activity and movement.

Even if we know where we are going, this journey can still be adventurous and full of unknowns. It has many ups, downs, and turns. There are many unexpected things we will face. There will be dangers, temptations, and risks. Also, happiness and joy.

This journey is also one with many choices and decisions. We make choices and decisions whether that is right or wrong, whether that is good or bad for us. This journey is full of interesting activity.

Our scripture talks about the journey from different perspectives.

Today's reading talks about how we prepare for the journey of faith and how we should behave while we are on the journey. The context and times are different from ours, but it speaks to what we are facing in life.

First reading from Exodus, we see Moses called by God in a burning bush, and he is summoned to go before Pharaoh to free his people from their bondage.

Moses, without much public speaking skill, approaches Pharaoh.

God then sends plagues upon Egypt, and Pharaoh refuses to release the Israelites nine times. At the tenth and final plague, with the death of Egypt's firstborn children and animals, Pharaoh finally lets them go.

In chapter 12, we hear the instructions given to the people to prepare to leave and begin a new life, a new journey.

This event of liberation is called Passover—a time to leave behind the former things and begin a new journey.

On the first day of the first month, the people are to choose a lamb and watch over it until the 14th day. At twilight, they are to slaughter the lamb and put its blood on the posts of their house. The angel of death will pass over those homes where a lamb has been slaughtered and roasted, and where its blood marks the house posts.

They are to eat the lamb with unleavened bread, and whatever remains must be burned, leaving no leftovers. They are dressed in sandals, with staff in hand, and the people are to eat in observance of God's act of liberation.

This is their preparation for the journey to the Promised Land: leaving behind former things and beginning a new journey.

This is what the Christian faith is about, forgetting the former sins of yesterday. Through the Passover, we leave what has been wrong before the Lamb of God, move on, and begin anew.

That is what we do in our church worship lives. We come before God, leave behind the sins of yesterday—whatever sins or wrongs we have been through—we leave them before Him, reconcile with God, and begin our days, our journey, with a contrite heart.

The readings from Romans and Matthew talk about how to behave on the journey of faith.

Romans suggests that the days are short and evil, so we must be prepared. In Romans 14:12, it urges us to put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.

Matthew offers guidance on reconciliation when relationships are broken, as described in Matthew 18:15–20.

In Romans, the Apostle Paul reminds us that we should have no debt outstanding except the debt to love one another. He emphasizes that love is the central key to all relationships. The commandments, such as prohibitions against adultery, murder, theft, and greed, all express the call to live together in love for one another.

All ethical commandments are expressions of the call to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. This call to love our neighbours also comes with a warning: recognize that the time has come to wake up from our sleep.

The day of the Lord is near to us. So make sure that we are ready. And by ready, we live with neighbours in love.

Paul contrasts life as living in the light and living in the darkness. He says we should not let the actions of darkness define our lives, but instead let our lives reflect the light.

When we live our lives in ways that are hypocritical, we fail to reflect the presence of God in our lives. So, as we are on the journey, walk in the light.

Matthew's Gospel reflects on how we can avoid hypocritical living.

Matthew offers us a way of correction.

If we see a brother or sister in the faith sinning, then it is our responsibility to offer correction.

First, go and offer correction. If it doesn't work, take a brother or sister with you. If that still doesn't work, Jesus says to take it to the church. If that doesn't work, then treat them as tax collectors and sinners.

How did Jesus treat tax collectors and sinners?

Jesus treated tax collectors and sinners as his friends, and we know that he welcomed them.

What Jesus is saying is that we should restore the relationship and treat each other with love, so that all may experience the love of God and share that love with their neighbours.

God's vision here is that whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whenever two or three agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them in heaven.

The vision of God is that our journey on this earth is filled with love and forgiveness. Jesus promises to be with us whenever we seek to love one another.

We have witnessed a natural disaster in many places, and especially in the last few weeks, we have seen this in Nepal, and it reminded us how small we are in the face of nature and its power.

One important lesson from this disaster and from every disaster is our never-ending responsibility to work together to bring about good and love in action.

When the disaster first happened, Nepal initially refused international disaster relief from other countries. However, they soon realized how serious the situation was and accepted the relief and assistance. Many countries sent rescue teams and relief supplies. This event reminds us that we must unite and work together for the greater good. And God will be with us.

Our journey is not a journey alone, but a journey with one another—a journey with our fellow believers, brothers and sisters in Christ. Our journey is a journey with God to an unknown destination.

The goal of our journey is not about how fast we reach our destination. Our goal is to consider how much we have loved others along the way and how many times we have forgiven others on our journey of faith.

Do you remember how many people you have loved in your life's journey so far? How many times have you forgiven others so far?

This is God's ultimate plan for our mission. Love is His foremost reason for the cross—for us, for our church.

Leave behind former things, love one another, and work together. This is the way to bring healing and reconciliation to the journey that we are on with people we belong to.

Amen.