

“The Journey”

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*First Presbyterian Church
Wilkes-Barre, PA
Genesis 12:1-4a
Philippians 4:8*

What a glorious, wonderful, and inspiring morning! Thank you, thank you for sharing with us this morning! Thank you for journeying across the Susquehanna River to be with us here this morning. (It fits my sermon – work with me!)

Bright and talented students from our nation and from around the world – journeying from China, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Germany and other nations – to Kingston Pennsylvania, representing numerous religions, among them, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu.

And don't they look so well put together – so chic! Shirts tucked in just right, skirts exactly the correct length, and their shoes, not a flip flop among them – those are reserved for our politicians!

Again, welcome, and thank you.

This morning I want to remind each of you, perhaps especially the youth, that you are on a journey, and the path, the future is open. Your choices, your decisions will make all the difference on your destination and fulfillment.

I speak from the philosophy of the Judeo-Christian tradition. I hope other traditions would find consonance with this position – The Future is open, and is in God's hands. History is not cyclical, it is linear – purposeful, meaningful and that makes all the difference – in your journey!

Beware of naysayers. Beware of those who eclipse the future, who see nothing up ahead.

I am reminded of such limited visionaries of the past. Here are some negative predictors of the future...

“Man will never reach the moon regardless of all future scientific advances” - Dr. Lee DeForest, Inventor of TV

“There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom.” – Robert Millikan, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1923

“Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.” – Popular Mechanics, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949

“I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.” – Thomas Watson, Chairman of IBM, 1943

“I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and I can assure you that data processing is a fad that won't last out the year.” – The editor in charge of business books for Prentice Hall, 1957

“But what...is it good for?” – Engineer at the Advanced Computing Systems Division of IBM, 1968, commenting on the microchip.

“This ‘telephone’ has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.” – Western Union internal memo, 1876

“The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?” – David Sarnoff’s associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920’s

“There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.” – Ken Olson, president, Chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977

“We don’t like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out.” – Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962

“Everything that can be invented has been invented.” – Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, U.S. Office of Patents, 1899

Instead. The future is open! The possibilities are infinite! That’s the way God created this universe! Life’s journey is before you! It’s open, filled with challenging and wondrous possibilities! Life – Time for learning, growth, relationships, ups and downs, clarity, disappointments – life!

Last week my 30 something daughter read once again out loud “Where the Wild Things Are.” It took about two minutes, but brought back memories from when she was a child. Well, we went to see the epic film – Where the Wild Things Are. I enjoyed it. There is much to discuss. I couldn’t help but think of Max’s journey in his boat across the waters to the land of monsters – where he learned some primary lessons of life, of Homer, Virgil, and the Bible. (Stay with me.) Max must deal with his anger, as well as realize his depth of heart. The rebirth scene is amazing. From psychology to sociology this film is worthy of consideration and discussion.

The journey of Max.

Which brings me to a truly great civilizational epic story – Abraham’s call in Genesis 12. You realize that half of the world’s population looks to this progenitor as their ancestor to their faith, their religion. Judaism, Christianity and Islam – all revere and respect Father Abraham, the one who then “Abram” is told by God to journey, to leave his comfortable surroundings, his status quo, and go to a new place, a new land, to discover. This begins one of the greatest epic stories of the world’s civilizations! Imagine, one in two people in this world trace their heritage back to this person! Imagine if he had said, “Ah, no thanks! Cannot do! Gonna stick with the old idols, and the flip flops.”

But, instead, “So Abram went, as the Lord had told him...” and the rest is history – via – the glory of Judaism, Christianity and Islam!

And along the way, via Western Civilization, Paul the Apostle, well versed in his Judaism and in Greek philosophy, shares with his friends at Philippi. He has been journeying throughout the Mediterranean area, and now is in prison for the sake of the gospel. Paul knows of Plato’s virtues, wisdom, justice, fortitude and temperance. He is encouraging them on their journey of life. Take a look in Plato’s cave, and journey with Abraham.

Two thousand years later – my friends hear this encouragement for your journey...virtues to live by... Hear Jewish, Greek and Christian influence.

Finally, friends, whatever is true

Whatever is honorable
Whatever is just
Whatever is pure
Whatever is lovely
Whatever is gracious
If there is any excellence
If there is anything worthy of praise
Think about these things.

The Lord said, “Go...” The future is open!

From this text and a myriad of others, and our history, we believe the future is open – waiting for creative minds to change and bless our world! And, such minds will be guided by virtues of excellence that are worthy of praise.

“...and by all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.”

Amen.