



Feb 11 Reset our Direction Acts 9:1-15

How is your sense of direction? Are you like a homing pigeon? Great sense of direction, able to get yourself home, in the dark, in the middle of a storm...you never get lost?

Or do you NEED, absolutely NEED GPS?

This cartoon from the Far Side... That is a pretty accurate description of my pathfinding abilities. I'm Elroy. Let me read the caption to you, **"For heaven's sake, Elroy! Now look where the earth is! Move over and let me drive."**

I have plenty of stories of getting gloriously lost. I even ended up on the roof of my friend's house one time. But for that story, that took years to live down, you will have to come to the Meet and Greet after church. Ha!

A better question for us today is...how is your spiritual direction capabilities?

How well do you follow your God-compass? How finely tuned are you to that quiet inner voice of God?

Can you hear the voice the prophet Isaiah talked about in chapter 30, verse 21, **"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'**" Can you hear "warm, warmer, HOT!" or "Cold, colder, coldest!" in your relationship with God?

Whether we've been in the church for a long time or are exploring the faith, Jesus sometimes calls us to move in a new direction. Even when we think we are already heading in the right direction.

The following story is from Rev. Enger Mu-tay-techi. A story of receiving guidance from an unlikely source in her life.

"Mom, I have a better way to get to school!"

My daughter, 6 years old at the time, from the back seat, said these words to me as I began driving her to school.

Now I can't remember if the bus never came that day or if we missed it all together. What I do remember from that day though, was that my normally quiet and organized and reserved child became a human GPS.

I didn't realize that on her morning bus rides she had memorized the entire bus route from our house to her school.

That day, frustrated and in a hurry, and flustered, I said, “Oh goodness, now let me see what is the quickest way to get you to school.” And my daughter, without missing a beat said, “**Mom, don’t take your way. I have a better way.**”

Having nothing to lose and wanting to get her to school on time, I gave up control and let a 6-year-old take the wheel, figuratively speaking.

As I drove, I listened to my daughter from the back seat, give me every direction. “Turn right, get in that lane, go straight, take the next left after the corner.”

And Enger ended her story admitting...“**You know friends, we got to her school on time, in one piece, and with our spirits calmer than when we first begun the trip.**”

I don’t know about you but most of the time, I can’t abide back seat drivers. Even if they are cute. But thankfully, Reverend Enger knew somehow to let go of control and trust.

Maybe she was simply testing to see IF her daughter could do it? That daughter was pretty impressive.

Many reasons why this story is so delightful to me. Mostly, embarrassment happened to someone else. Happy ending, it all worked out. Teaches us deeper truths about following God. But maybe especially how a little kid helped an adult.

But maybe a dynamic we are not very familiar with?

Normally, as adults we have better judgement in problem solving. We need to protect and guide our kids. But this story flipped the script on us a bit.

It can be easy or easier to imagine Jesus calling us to make a course correction when we first enter the faith, when we are young and just learning how to follow.

But it is harder to picture Jesus calling us to move in a new direction when we are not new to the Christian faith. When we have been “adulting” fairly well in our faith for years.

As adults, adulting well in our faith, we can sometimes become convinced over time we are going the “right” way with God, all the time. No need to question it.

But sometimes we may not be aligned with a new direction the Lord is calling us take.

Are we willing to listen, to be open? Can we ask, “**Lord am I still on the right track?**”

We sometimes drift off course and sometimes Jesus takes a hard left or a hard right. Maybe stops us in our tracks. And we have to notice and follow.

God called Saul and Ananias to reset their direction in today’s scripture passage. Acts 9 is one of my favorite passages because there is some drama. And because it matches in many ways my own coming to faith in Jesus story when I was sixteen.

Verse one, “**Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples.**” Saul had requested letters of permission from the High Priest to not only capture and torture but also kill followers of the Way, followers of Jesus. Wow! Saul was intense, a murderer.

And as this murderously intense guy was busy capturing and persecuting and killing followers of Jesus, the Lord met Saul right in the middle of all of that. The Lord intervened.

Saul is traveling by horseback, nearing his destination in Damascus, to kill more Christians when a bright light shines from heaven and a booming voice asks, **“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”**

In the shock of it all, Saul is knocked off his horse. But he is able to ask, **“Who are you, Lord?”** And the voice identifies himself, **“I am Jesus the one you are persecuting.”**

Immediately, Saul is blinded and did not eat for three days. His eyes were open, the scriptures tell us, but he could not see anything. His physical state was indicative of his spiritual condition.

Saul thought that because he had been educated about God and had all the credentials. That he knew all about how God moved and the way God worked. And yet Saul was blind to the true ways in which the Spirit of God moves.

And then there was Ananias. A follower of Jesus, whom the Spirit of God spoke to in a vision. God told Ananias to go to where Saul was and stay there.

The Spirit of God had already prepped the blind Saul, showing him in a vision that Ananias would come. That he would lay his hands on Saul and Saul would regain his sight.

This is a powerful example of how little you need to know of God, to be called and used by God. God does not wait for us to understand everything or believe completely before the Spirit of God meets us and guides us.

We don't have to be super holy, saintly, or pray for hours each day to receive guidance. The example of Saul teaches us we don't have to be all that willing even or even headed anywhere near the right direction.

The Lord resets our direction where we are, just how we are.

Did you catch the good news? God resets our direction right where we are, just how we are. Thank you, God!

I do think the Lord is looking for, hoping for some willingness on our part. But we can do it the hard way...like Saul. Or we can do it the easy way...like Ananias.

But let's be honest, being open and willing to be guided by God is not easy. We really don't like resetting our direction in life when God is at work in our lives.

I don't even like hearing the GPS saying, “Recalculating”!

So, when it comes to God we might have some resistance.

Why is that? Why do we resist God?

Maybe there are trust issues. Or we simply like being in charge of our own lives. Even pushing the “pause” button on our lives, to try and listen to God feels hard.

Anxiety might ramp up. We might feel like failures or shame in not knowing what to do next, not liking that feeling of being dependent.

I also don't even like slowing down and asking humans for directions.

My personal motto used to be, “**I don’t know where I am going, but I am making good time!**” I have slowed down, grown some.

We want to grow in our ability to follow God. We want to move on the right path, in the right direction, Godward on God’s priorities and pathways.

What if we decided to become more open to meeting God in the ordinariness and messiness of life? To be open, slow down, expect to hear nudges...HOT or COLD, to discern the Holy Spirit’s guidance in new ways.

A way that makes us take a new direction, in a way we didn’t expect.

That this work of **RESETTING** ourselves on God, resetting our direction is about all of us listening and sharing what we are hearing from God.

Both Saul and Ananias were called by the Lord to take a new direction in a way they didn’t expect.

Now sometimes God’s grace arrests us, its dramatic, convicting us so that we can change directions in our lives, like in Saul’s conversion story. The hard way.

But sometimes God’s grace comes more gently, like with Ananias. God is still guiding and still redirecting but we can more easily go with the flow of walking in step with God. The easy way.

Ananias had his struggles and fears but he kept following God.

You get to choose.

Like it says in Galatians 5:25, “**If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.**” Just like Ananias did. And Saul, who later becomes Paul, we know he becomes an amazing disciple in time.

In closing, when God called Ananias’ name, we notice the disciple’s heart attitude was right. Because his response was correct, he replied, “Yes, Lord.”

I like the English Standard Version better, Ananias’ response is, “Here I am Lord!” Which matches Isaiah’s response to God’s call in his life, “Here I am! Send me!”

Whether we are disciples that look a bit more like Saul than we care to admit. Or we are ready and willing like Ananias; or somewhere in between...God is calling out to us. The Lord keeps extending grace to us every day.

Each day we have a fresh opportunity to offer our own prayerful version to God of “Here I am!”

As we come to our Time of Reflection, we have a wonderful song to guide our thoughts. As you listen...are you ready, open, able to say, “Here I am Lord?”