

Pilgrimage

Over the course of the summer a number of folks from Faith United have read together the book *Everyday Spirituality* by James Hazelwood. In this book the author reflects on the spiritual practice of pilgrimage. The concept of taking or going on a pilgrimage is an old one in our world, one of the most ancient rituals that continues to hold meaning for human beings. Pilgrims play an important role in our own culture as Americans, of course, but beyond that many of our biblical ancestors went on pilgrimages as well.

A pilgrimage is a journey taken for the purpose of spiritually engaging with the new and the holy. Pilgrims came to America seeking a new life marked by religious freedom, the apostle Paul travelled throughout the ancient Mediterranean to encounter new communities that he could share the good news of Christ's love with, even Jesus and his family took on a trip to the holy city of Jerusalem each year for important feasts and festivals. Martin Luther took a pilgrimage from his home in Germany to Rome to visit the ancient sites of his faith, and it was on this journey that his eyes were opened to many of the injustices of the church.

Many faith traditions encourage their adherents to go on pilgrimages to holy places. One of my hopes in life is to complete the Camino de Santiago, a many-day walk across northern Spain that culminates at the city of Santiago de Compostela, the place where St. James' body has supposedly reached its final resting place. But while other pilgrims make that journey to get to the holy place, my purpose is different. Perhaps St. James' body really is there, perhaps it isn't. What I'm inspired by instead is the act of walking, reflecting, and praying on a road that hundreds of thousands of faithful Christians before me have also walked, reflected, and prayed on. The journey is what calls to me—the journey of prayer is what connects me to ancestors in faith.

When it is put that way, every journey we take in life can be a pilgrimage when it is done prayerfully. When you stretch your legs and walk around your neighborhood, when you journey to the post office to send a letter to a friend, when you make your way through the grocery store to find food to nourish yourself and your family, when you make your way to church each Sunday, you are on a journey with God. As our world begins to turn from summer to fall this year, I invite you to pay attention to the world around you a bit more closely. When you run errands, when you walk, when you travel, when you talk to friends, take a moment to pray. Thank God for this journey that you are on, that we are on. God is with us on this pilgrimage.

In peace, Pastor Marissa