

## Isaiah 30:15-22

For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel:

In returning and rest you shall be saved;

in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.

But you refused and said,

'No! We will flee upon horses'—

Therefore you shall flee! And,

'We will ride upon swift steeds'—

Therefore your pursuers shall be swift!

A thousand shall flee at the threat of one,

at the threat of five you shall flee,

until you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain,

like a signal on a hill.

Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you;

therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you.

For the LORD is a God of justice;

blessed are all those who wait for him.

Truly, O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.' Then you will defile your silver-covered idols and your gold-plated images. You will scatter them like filthy rags; you will say to them, 'Away with you!'

## John 14:1-6

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.

Thomas said to him,

Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?

Jesus said to him,

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

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The Word of the Lord; thanks be to God. Join me in prayer. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen

# The Feet of God

## *The God Who Is the Way*

During this sermon series on Psalm 115 we have looked at the world through the eyes of Jesus. We have listened to others with the ears of Jesus. We have considered what it means to touch with the hands of Jesus. This morning we continue to look at Psalm 115, which is serving as a framework for understanding what theologians call

*The incarnation*: the coming of God to earth as a man—Jesus of Nazareth—fully God and fully human.

We've been considering the *impact* of the incarnation on the people of *Jesus' time* and the *implications* of the incarnation on people *today*. We have just one more body part to look at after this, followed by a review and summary of what we have learned.

So we've come to the feet of Jesus: the human feet of God that walked this earth. And once again we ask,

*What did it matter?*

*What does it matter that Jesus had feet and walked this earth?*

This morning, we want to walk the earth with the feet of Jesus. We want to walk the path of his life, his ministry; this is the path that our ancestors in the faith have done their best to walk faithfully.

What is this path? Where did Jesus walk?

Well, literally, he walked pretty much everywhere he went.

He *walked* from town to town.

He *walked* into homes.

He *walked* into synagogues.

He *walked* in the wilderness.

He *walked* onto boats.

He *walked* on water.

He *walked* the Jericho Road with his face set towards Jerusalem.

He mounted the steps to the Upper Room, and later walked to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Then he *walked* the road to Calvary where his feet were nailed to the cross.

And after the resurrection, he *walked* the Damascus Road with some of his disciples.  
So you might say that *to walk where Jesus walked* is to follow in the steps of his ministry.

That's in part what Jesus was telling Thomas in our gospel today when he said,  
**I am the way and the truth and the life.**  
**No one comes to the father but by me.**

Jesus was also speaking about salvation: that the way to God is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's why we use this scripture so often at funerals or memorial services.

But we need to follow Jesus not just so we can get into heaven, but also while we are still living here on earth. We need to follow in the steps of his ministry every day in all that we do.

Unfortunately, all too often we like to strike out on our own, to "do it my way." That's what the people in our Old Testament lesson had done.

Isaiah was writing in response to a political alliance that King Hezekiah had entered into. A power vacuum had been formed when the king of Assyria died. Neighboring nations were plotting to take advantage of the situation and gain control of the region. Hezekiah was involving Israel in one of these plots. Isaiah spoke up to remind Hezekiah and the people that their country's security did not lie in being like other nations: it didn't lie in politics. Instead, Judah's security came from depending on *Yahweh*, on *God*, and on *God's timing*.

How was Judah to be saved? Isaiah says it was by *returning* and *resting*: *returning* to Yahweh and *resting* there.

Where would Judah find strength? Isaiah says it was in *quietness* and *trust*: being *quiet* before Yahweh and *trusting* in God's sovereignty.

But did Judah return and rest? No.  
Was Judah quiet and trusting? No.

Instead of doing it God's way, they wanted to do it man's way: the way of power and action, of politics and force. They would go to Egypt and ask for military help. But Isaiah warned them that *this is not the way*. This isn't God's way of handling Assyria. Here's how one commentator sums up Isaiah's critique of Hezekiah's plan:

*Why would you go to **Egypt** for help when it is only **God** who can save you? Furthermore, why would you distrust God, thereby bringing upon yourselves the very disaster you fear, when God's grace is so real that even after your disobedience, he will save you?*

[New International Commentary on the OT, Isaiah 1-39, 559]

For Isaiah says, *the Lord waits to be gracious to you, He rises to show you compassion.*

That's the *good news* of this passage: that even though the people choose the wrong way, Yahweh still shows justice and compassion. Our sovereign God *takes* the mistakes we make, *redeems* them, and *uses* them to achieve his purposes.

That is the way of God: the way of compassion, the way of justice and mercy, the way of salvation, the way of strength.

And all the people needed to do was to *return*, to *rest*.

All that was required of them was *quietness* and *trust*.

And once they did those simple things, Yahweh would show them the way, God's way. They would recognize their idols of silver and gold as the man-made useless objects they were.

This is the point at which they would be following the path of God, when they would be walking *in the way*, the way of God. That's when they would be listening to the still, small voice of God.

So what of us today? Are we going God's way or our own way?

What are our horses and chariots? What are our idols?

What do we worship that we've wrapped in silver and gold?

Let's take a look at some of our modern-day idols, whose paths we seek instead of God's.

One prime example is marriage and family. Marriage can be a wonderful thing. In the Catholic Church it's even a sacrament. Unfortunately, too many people use marriage as a way to gain control, a way to feel loved. Children who grow up in homes where they have been abused physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally grow up without a sense of control. When they are adults, they may see marriage as a way to gain the control they have never had. Let me play to stereotypes for a minute: an abused *son* becomes an abusing *husband*, finally seizing control himself. After years of being at the mercy of his parents' anger and frustration he now lashes out at his wife and children. And an abused *daughter* has become an abused *wife*, relinquishing control over her life to her husband just as she learned as a child to relinquish control to her parents.

Another woman may see marriage as a way to feel loved. This is too often true of young women who lost their fathers to divorce, death, desertion, or disinterest. Growing up without the security of a father's love, she seeks love in what she hopes is an ideal marriage. Too often she pretends love is there when it's not. So she moves from one relationship to the next, like a chain-smoker, unwilling to be without a man because that would mean she is unloved and unlovable.

Another modern-day idol we dress up in fancy clothes is our work, our careers. Here again, like marriage, work is a good thing. It can be satisfying and is certainly necessary. But again, like marriage, work can be a place to hide a multitude of sins. It can be a way to feel worthy. It can be a way to feel powerful.

These ways are not God's ways. These are the ways of Judah, not the ways of Yahweh. And God still longs to show us compassion, to whisper in our ears, *this is the way, walk in it.*

I invite you to let today's scriptures challenge you! Ask yourself, *in what way am I clinging to things that are not of God. In what way have I strayed from the path that God has laid out before me?*

Take to heart the promises of the Lord in the words of Isaiah:  
*He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your*

*eyes shall see your Teacher. And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'*

Can we do that today? Can we listen for that voice? Will we turn to God, trusting that He longs to and will show us compassion?

When we are looking for love in all the wrong places, we need to **return to God**.

When we are out of control we need to **give control over to God** and live in **quietness**.

When we feel inadequate we need to **trust in God's worthiness**.

When we are frantically working to feel secure and powerful, we need to **rest in God's power and provision**.

I believe that's what Jesus is talking about when he tells his disciples, **I am the way, the truth, and the life**.

When we turn to Jesus, when we trust and rest in him, that's where we find our strength and our salvation.

When we stop trying to do it our own way, when instead we cry out to God for forgiveness and help, that's when, whether we turn to the right or the left, we can hear the voice behind us saying,  
**This is the way, walk in it.**

We'll hear that voice in our marriages and in relationships. We'll hear that voice as we work and as we seek balance in our lives.

And as we walk the way that God directs us we will find that we feel *loved*, that we feel *worthy*, that we feel *secure*, that we feel *strong*, because we have followed the way of God.

As our Lord told Thomas,  
We know the way because Jesus has shown it to us.  
We know it because his feet walked it for us.  
We know it because **we know Jesus**:  
The way, the truth, and the life  
**We know the Way**: let us walk in it.

AMEN