



SPRINGCREEK CHURCH

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A PILGRIMAGE OF PAIN AND HOPE

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Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. Psalm 84.5

Psalms of Ascent and Psalms of Descent

"To be a Christian is to be a traveler." - Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*

"...we've lost this idea of pilgrimage, we've lost this idea of human beings walking for a very, very long time. It does change you."
- Robyn Davidson

Jesus walked 21,525 miles in his lifetime

1. THE SOUL'S ASPIRATION



My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Psalm 84.2

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me... Psalm 139.7-10a

I am a God who is everywhere and not in one place...Do you not know that I am everywhere in heaven and on earth. Jeremiah 23.23-24 (Good News)

Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem. John 4.20

Jesus replied, "...believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem...a time is coming...when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth..." John 4.21-23

❑ All true worship is not geographically centered. It's heart centered.

Blessed...are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...for they shall be completely satisfied. Matthew 5.6 (Amplified)



❑ You have as much of God right now as you really want.

"God waits to be wanted." – A.W. Tozer

"[Prayer is] keeping company with God." - Clement of Alexandria

2. THE SOUL'S APPROACH

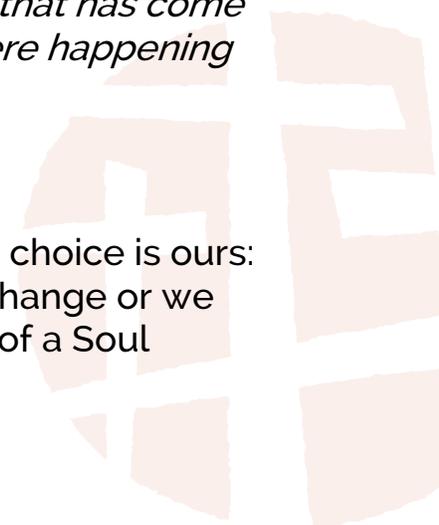
Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs... Psalm 84.5-6

"...they pass through the Valley of Baka..."

We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14.22

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 1 Peter 4.12

"...we can willfully embark on the journey or not. The choice is ours: either we decide to journey in hope of growth and change or we resign to life as it is." - Phileena Heuertz, Pilgrimage of a Soul



❑ To God, how long it takes to get where we're going is not nearly as important as the kind of people we're becoming along the way.

❑ God never wastes a hurt

"The concept of pilgrimage rests on three essential ingredients—encounter, reflection, transformation." - Trevor Hudson, *Mile in My Shoes*

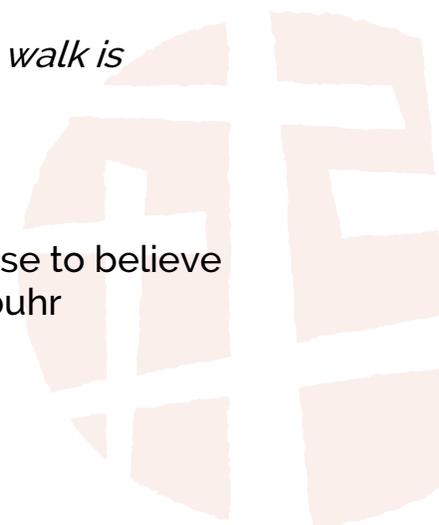
Encounter – Reflection – Transformation

3. THE SOUL'S ARRIVAL

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you. Psalm 84.11-12

...no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. Psalm 84.11

"Most of our problems in life come because we refuse to believe that God is as good as He says He is." - Richard Niebuhr



"A pilgrim is formed by the question 'Do I trust Him?'" - Michelle Van Loon, *Born to Wander*

"Don't lose heart. God has never left your side and He has a plan to see you through even the most discouraging circumstances." - Dr. Tony Evans

Carlos Quineros – spaced about 3 seconds apart

"...in the spiritual life, the word discipline means the effort to create some space in which God can act." - Henri Nouwen

❑ Christ is incarnated in human need

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever gone on a long walk, hike or travelled any great distance on foot? What was that experience like for you? How was it different from seeing that same terrain by other means? Do it have any effect on your spiritual life? And if it did, how?
2. The whole point of pilgrimage (and for that matter any and all of the spiritual disciplines) is to experience more of God. Pilgrimage carves out a large block of time to spend with God while on a journey. The time on the way gives us plenty of opportunity for reflection, prayer and even conversation with our fellow pilgrims. What have you found to be the most regular and enjoyable spiritual disciplines you engage in? How have they expanded your capacity for God?

3. Passing through the Valley of Baka appears to be a metaphor that represents times of difficulty in our life, times of bareness and times of weeping. No believer escapes trials and difficulties in life we are told in Scripture. Even the assumption in the Psalm is not whether you will pass through the valley experiences of life but what to do when you do. In times of difficulty, what we believe is put to the test. But also, there is a real temptation to turn inward and become one with our pain. The Psalmist writer explains that it's the pilgrim who transforms the valley experience. We mark the trail for others who will surely have to come this same way themselves. Have trials been something you merely endured or have you made sure that others have profited from your experience? Since God never wastes a hurt, have you allowed Him to use even the terrible things that have happened to you to be a conduit of healing to others? If so, share your experiences with others?
4. As Michelle Van Loon said, "A pilgrim is formed by the question 'Do I trust Him?'" How has your journey through life deepened or damaged your trust in God?
5. Since we can always find Christ in the deepest pockets of human need (based on what He told us in Matthew 25), what God experiences have you had among those who suffer, the poor, the elderly and society's most vulnerable people?
6. For Further Study: Take some time to read the Psalms of Ascent and Descent (Psalms 120-134). What else do you learn about pilgrimage from these Psalms? How might they help you in your daily walk with God?

