

January 6, 2017 – Epiphany  
Text: Isaiah 60:1-6  
Theme: “Half the Fun is in Getting There”

**As I was growing up, my mother and I were often known to take less than direct routes when going places. In fact, as I learned to drive, we discovered most of the back roads in our region of the state. We have never been people very fond of the freeway. I still have many memories of my father shaking his head and wondering how it could take two hours and a ½ tank of gas to get to and from the mall, which was 3 miles away...by the freeway. Even today, if I have the time, I would always rather take back roads to get where I’m going, simply because it makes the journey more interesting.**

**Type A people often do not understand this. They cannot understand that the most direct route is not always a priority. But, you do not have to be a type B person to take the side roads in life. Sometimes one can still be type A and just adjust the goal. For instance, is the goal getting to wherever one is going as quickly as possible, or is the goal to learn something new along the way, to see something previously unnoticed, to meet the kind of character whom one would not meet along a freeway?**

**I have found it helpful to be a back road kind of person. God’s people are always on the move. In Genesis, we hear about**

**Abraham's call from Ur to the Promised Land via Haran, the Negev, Egypt, etc. Abraham was a nomad for a reason. God's people are nomadic by definition. It is when we get too settled and comfy in our lives that God likes to upset the fruit basket. He has no intention of letting us run our own lives or even imagine that we are in control.**

**Now a great many people spend their lives crying because just when they get everything in order, God turns it all upside down. But why cry? All God is doing is showing us a new back road, a path unseen, a new character, an open door. We moan and cry all day, or we can enjoy the new path.**

**We grow up with the lie – "you can be whatever you want to be." That is not true. I could never make it in the NBA regardless of how much I wanted it. But children are often taught that if they make the right choices, everything will go their way. Not true. Things are going to go the way God has willed them, regardless of the choices you thought were right.**

**Parents live in despair because they think that if they had parented differently, their children would be better? If you did not raise your child to know the Lord, or if you did things that led him away from the Lord, be ashamed of yourselves. Repent and receive**

**God's forgiveness. Then talk to your kid, repent and seek his forgiveness. If you raised your child to know the Lord, you did your main job. But your parenting cannot change God's will or your child's choices. Every human being has free will and God responds to our choices.**

**Marriage is another huge problem for people who fantasize that they run their own lives. Little girls are brought up with the imagery of Prince Charming riding on a white steed only to be faced with Homer Simpson driving a '95 Geo. Boys are brought up believing that someday they will be worshipped by an adoring wife only to find themselves taunted by the unrealistic expectations of women looking for princes on steeds.**

**So people mourn all their poor choices and missed opportunities and so forth and so on. Now what if, instead of trying to discover where we took the wrong turn all the time, we simply leaned back, enjoyed the ride and tried to learn? What if we looked at the journey as the important thing because we already know the destination? We know where we are going and God knows when we'll get there, so the important thing for us is the journey.**

**"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.... Lift up your eyes and look about you...."**

**Today is Epiphany. While we all associate Epiphany with the coming of the wise men from the east, we miss the point if we stop there. The wise men were not Jews. They were the first Gentiles to worship Jesus. Epiphany and the weeks of Epiphany that follow are all about our life journey. We, like the wise men, are focused on worshipping the Savior as we journey. Epiphany is also about collecting folks along the way. How many Christian wise men were there? We don't know, but if they were anything like the shepherds, there were more of them after they had seen Jesus, because, like the shepherds, they probably could not contain themselves.**

**Imagine them as they returned to their countries. The entire east was surely astir at the news these men brought home. Thirty-seven years later St. Paul went into the east on his first evangelistic journey. I wonder if the magi were still alive and welcomed the news that the infant they had visited had completed his work. Do you see how the circle completes? The first Gentiles come from the east to worship the newborn Savior. And the Savior sends the missionary to the Gentiles back to the east as his first duty. It's all in the journey. Look for those completed circles.**

**God called Abraham from the east to be the father of his chosen nation. Isaiah wrote to Abraham's descendants in captivity in the east and reassured them that the Lord would bring them**

**home. The Magi came from the east to worship the king that came from a line that started in the east. And St. Paul went to the east to proclaim the completion of the circle.**

**Now, if we could pop into the lives of any of these people along the way, we would find that they were no different from us. They had families to care for and schedules to keep and responsibilities to fulfill. They, just like us, were on the journey to see the Savior. Isaiah spoke to people, just like us, who became frustrated that things were not moving along quickly enough. He spoke to people who sometimes wondered if they were on the right track, or worried that they were making wrong turns. And listen to what he said,**

**“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.... Lift up your eyes and look about you....”**

**Our light has come. He has done all the work that needs to be done to insure our final destination. We were people who at some time in our existence dwelt in darkness, but our light has come and because he has come, we can arise and shine. Not only can we get through life; we can enjoy life. Each and every day is a new adventure, a new twist, sometimes uphill and sometimes downhill but always one step closer to paradise.**