

Sermon August 29, 2010

Off the Map

Hebrews 11:1-10

Summary: Your life's journey is one that takes you "off the map." Going off the map is a scary thing to do. No wonder we try to make yesterday's map work for tomorrow's voyage! There is a better way: making your journey a faith journey.

I. Off the Map

A. Captain James Cook

- 1. James Cook was an unlikely candidate for "World's Greatest Explorer."**
 - a) He was the son of a Scottish farm laborer.**
 - b) He attended a village school.**
 - c) He began his career as a sailor on a coal ship.**
- 2. Cook joined the Royal Navy and distinguished himself as a navigator and surveyor – creating maps of North America that were used well into the 20th century.**
- 3. But he is best known for his momentous discoveries:**

- a) In 10 years' time he roamed the entire Pacific Ocean, discovering islands and coastlines that Europeans had never known existed.
- b) He was the first European to see and map the east coast of Australia.
- c) He discovered New Zealand's South Island.
- d) He discovered numerous islands in the South Pacific, not to mention Hawaii.
- e) He mapped the west coast of North America from Oregon to Alaska.

B. Sailing off the map

1. **Capt. Cook is credited with saying:** "Ambition leads me not only farther than any other man has been before me, but as far as I think it possible for man to go."
2. **But for him to fulfill this goal he had to do one thing – over and over:**
 - a) He had to be willing to "sail off the map."
 - b) He had to be willing to let go of the maps that had brought him to his present position – maps that in many cases he had drawn himself.
 - c) He had to weigh anchor, set sail, and point his little ship toward the unknown.
3. You don't discover new worlds in the safety of your armchair.

C. Sailing off your map

1. What would it take for you to sail off your map?
2. Most people spend the vast majority of their time trying to have the old maps define the next stage of the journey.
 - a) The past is much more certain and defined than the future.
 - b) How tempting to think that the things that made us successful up to this point will always work in the future!
 - c) How often do we restrict ourselves to what we or others have done before?
3. The old maps only keep us going around in circles; they can never lead us to new worlds.
4. So what would it take for you to sail off your map?

II. A Faith Journey

A. Abraham – a man who walked off the map

1. **The Great Discoverer of the Bible is a man named Abraham:**
 - a) Hebrews 11:8 NIV By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.
 - b) Hebrews 11:9 NIV By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.
 - c) Hebrews 11:10 NIV For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
2. **Here is a man who lived his entire adult life on the move – a perpetual journey TOWARD a greater promise.**
 - a) He left the familiarity and conformity of his homeland behind for a place he had never seen.
 - b) He did so with no master plan, no earthly security.
3. **He made this journey the ONE purpose of his life – a journey of discovery that brought him face to face with the God of the Universe.**

B. Lessons from Abraham's Journey

1. **Abraham's life-journey teaches us three things.**
2. **First, he stepped out into the unknown "even though he did not know where he was going."**
 - a) The one thing that the human mind most fears is **UNCERTAINTY**.
 - b) Scientists tell us that our brain works night and day on the business of predicting exactly what will happen next.
 - c) Abraham defied the threat of uncertainty and obeyed God's call to "walk off the map."
3. **Second, he was willing to resist the urge to want things to "get back to normal."**
 - a) Abraham lived the rest of his earthly life as a stranger in a foreign land.
 - b) He never stopped moving forward.
4. **Finally, Abraham kept his focus on the Big Picture.**
 - a) God had made him a promise of a future that only God could create and provide.
 - b) Abraham refused to settle for second-best, even though that meant that things would never go back to "normal."
 - c) He knew that God's promise would only be found "off the map."

C. Faith – the one indispensable ingredient

1. So what did it take for Abraham to walk off the map into unknown territory?
 - a) The writer to the Hebrews tells us that the one thing necessary for that journey was FAITH.
 - b) “By faith” Abraham set out on the journey.
 - c) “By faith” he and his descendants chose to live in a foreign place.
2. So just what IS faith?
 - a) Hebrews 11:1 NIV Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.
3. Faith “takes the place” of our senses and the certainty that they provide.
 - a) Faith allows us to “see” what is still invisible.
 - b) Faith gives us the courage to walk off the map when God points the way.

III. Leaving the Map Behind

A. December 1st

1. Last year, on the 1st of December, I walked into a doctor’s office to learn the results of a recent biopsy.
 - a) When the doctor arrived, the first thing he told me was that I had prostate cancer.
 - b) In that instant I found myself “off the map” and in unknown territory.
2. Or was I?
 - a) You see, my dad had fought prostate cancer for 7 years before dying from it in 1995.
 - b) So, in a sense, I had a map – an old map -- someone else’s map.
3. 10 days later I was in a second doctor’s office for a second opinion.
 - a) In discussing my case the doctor could see that I was assuming that my cancer was just a slightly earlier version of my dad’s.
 - b) He looked me in the eye and told me, “You don’t have your father’s cancer. Your situation is completely different.”
 - c) What was he saying? Throw away that old, misleading, useless map from your past!

B. Leaving the Map Behind

1. What would have happened if I had simply lived by the assumption that I was retracing my father’s path?

- a) First of all, I would be doomed to living with a death-date and no hope of escape.
 - b) Every day would be robbed of the simple joy of living in the now.
 - c) And I would miss the new and unimagined path that God had for me in this new territory!
2. God had a different path for me: a faith path.
 3. But to follow that path I have to decide every single day to walk off the map.
 - a) I need to keep trusting in what I cannot see or prove for myself in the here-and-now.
 - b) I need to accept a “new normal,” the new challenge of conquering this disease.
 - c) I need to focus on what really matters and what lasts forever!

C. Leaving Your Maps Behind

1. Think for a moment about what is going in your life right now.
 - a) Think about a place in your life where you face the challenge of stepping off the map.
 - b) It might involve a health issue, a relationship (past or present), changes in your family, a recent loss.
 - c) It might involve your finances, your career, your retirement.
 - d) It might involve making some major changes in lifestyle.
 - e) Whatever the case, think about a place in your life where you face the challenge of stepping off the map.
2. What would you have to leave behind if you were to actually step out into the unknown?
3. What would you have to believe in order to take that first step?
 - a) **“For we walk by faith and not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7.**