

Living Lent | Day 4

Climb Down Out of The Stagecoach

Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Matthew 23:1–12 RSV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

I remember reading once about those old “wild west” type stagecoaches. Do you know the kind? Four big wheels, horse drawn, driver sat up top, six or so passengers. Probably not the most comfortable ride but it got the job done. The thing that surprised me most though about this reading was what it said about how tickets were sold for these stagecoaches. Much like an airline ticket today they were sold by class. But the different classes in a stagecoach had nothing to do with how plush your seat was or how much leg room you could expect or the quality of food and drink you might be served in transit. Instead, they had to do with what was expected of the ticket holder in the event the stagecoach found itself in a difficult situation (e.g., deep mud, broken wheel, steep hill, etc.).

First class ticket holders paid the most and were therefore exempt from having to do

anything in the event of any hardship being encountered during the journey. They could stay right there in their seats sipping their complimentary beverage without having to budge an inch. Second class passengers, however, paid slightly less for their passage and were therefore expected to do a little more. If there was a snag along the way, this class of ticketholder was required to get out and walk alongside the stagecoach until the situation was resolved. Can you guess where this is going? Yep... Third class passengers paid the least but were always expected to do the most. Not only did they have to climb down out of the stagecoach, but they also had to get their hands dirty doing whatever it took to help resolve the situation. We live in a time and world where first class is often equated with prestige and privilege. To live a "first class life" is to be exempt from having to do the most menial kinds of work. It is to have the nicest clothes, the biggest house, a fancy job title, and a seat of honor at every banquet. But Jesus gave a very different interpretation to this metaphor of first class. In fact, according to Jesus the first class life looks a lot more like a third class ticket on the stagecoach. Rather than having everything done for us, we Christ-followers are instead called to a life of humility and servanthood. "The greatest among you will be your servant," Jesus says. The wheels of our world and of our lives are caked in an awful lot of mess and muck and mire these days, but Jesus reveals to us that our God is knee deep in it all. God climbs down out of the coach every single time and calls us to do the same.

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

The Reverend Alan Dyer was called to be the Pastor at St. Simons Island Presbyterian Church in June of 2013. A life-long Presbyterian from Dayton, Ohio, Alan has led SSPC through a major renovation project of the sanctuary and has celebrated with his congregants the 75th Anniversary of the founding of SSPC on St. Simons Island. Steeped in service, Alan leads the congregation of SSPC in lifting soup ladles for the hungry, building homes for the homeless, tutoring children who need a friend, and touching God's children around the world, including those at Morningstar. SSPC's congregation remains faithful in financial support individually and collectively to the ministry of Morningstar.

*It takes a lot of everything to **create home and healing** for the foster children, our neighbors, served at Morningstar Children's Home.*

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