

**Isaiah 9:1-4**

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

**Matthew 4:12-23**

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles - the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea - for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

## Grasshopper on the Road: chapter 1

I have spent the last two weeks sitting in a library with my nose in one book after another, reading until my eyes went crossed and I could read no more. I'm happy to be home, and I would like to read you a book...

Today we will just read the opening chapter. The book is entitled "Grasshopper on the Road" by Arnold Lobel. It begins;

Grasshopper wanted to go on a journey. "I will find a road," he said. "I will follow that road wherever it goes." One morning Grasshopper found a road. It was long and dusty. It went up hills and down into valleys. "This road looks find to me," said Grasshopper. "I am on my way!"

### Chapter 1: The Club

Grasshopper walked quickly along the road. He saw a sign on the side of a tree. The sign said MORNING IS BEST. Soon Grasshopper saw another sign. It said THREE CHEERS FOR MORNING. Grasshopper saw a group of beetles. They were singing and dancing. They were carrying more signs. "Good morning," said Grasshopper. "Yes," said one of the beetles. "It is a good morning. *Every* morning is a good morning!" The beetle carried a sign. It said MAKE MINE MORNING. "This is a meeting of the We Love Morning Club," said the beetle. "Every day we get together to celebrate another bright, fresh morning. Grasshopper, do you love morning?" asked the beetle. "Oh yes," said Grasshopper. "Hooray!" shouted all the beetles. "Grasshopper loves morning!" "I knew it," said the beetle. "I could tell by your kind face. You are a morning lover." The beetles made Grasshopper a wreath of flowers. They gave him a sign that said MORNING IS TOPS. "Now," they said, "Grasshopper is in our club." "When does the clover sparkle with dew?" asked a beetle. "In the morning!" cried all the other beetles. "When is the sunshine yellow and new?" asked the beetle. "In the morning!" cried all the other beetles. They turned somersaults and stood on their heads. They danced and sang. "M-O-R-N-I-N-G spells morning!"

"I love afternoon too," said Grasshopper.

The beetles stopped singing and dancing. "What did you say?" they asked. "I said that I loved afternoon," said Grasshopper. All the beetles were quiet. "And night is very nice," said Grasshopper.

"Stupid," said a beetle. He grabbed the wreath of flowers. "Dummy," said another beetle. He snatched the sign from Grasshopper. "Anyone who loves afternoon and night can never, never be in our club!" said a third beetle. "UP WITH MORNING!" shouted all the beetles. They waved their signs and marched away. Grasshopper was alone. He saw the yellow sunshine. He saw the dew sparkling on the clover. And he went on down the road.

## Sermon

We are all on a journey. Think about your own journey and where it began. For some of us, our journey began because of the path that someone else took us on. We did not particularly have a choice in the road, but we came along for the ride and at some point found that we had chosen to stay on the journey. For others of us, there was a moment, a pivotal event that moved us onto the road that we are walking now. We saw a new opportunity, sought a new path, and began down the road. We may have started the journey out of a sense of adventure, or maybe it was because of an invitation from someone we trusted. For many of us, we started a journey that we hoped would take us to the destination where we thought we wanted to be. Whatever initiated us, we are all on a journey.

And since you are here today, part of your journey is intersected with the journey of White Lick Presbyterian. Our congregations journey began over 165 years ago when there was no booming suburban neighborhoods in the communities around us. Only farms and farmers and a few supporting businesses. It was a journey of faith, to create a place of worship in the midst of the forest and fields of Hendricks county. It took the people through a fire that burned the original structure, the rebuilding of the brick sanctuary that we worship in today. It took us through generations of families. A season of strong Sunday school and itinerant pastors. A season of dwindling membership where the doors of church were held open by two or three families. A season of rebuilding, of creating a youth group, of expanding, of identity formation and wilderness time and back again. There have been years of surplus and years of deficits. And somewhere along the path, you came along side, and your journey has intersected with that of this congregation.

Jesus also begins his journey on the road. Matthew describes the beginning of this journey as a fulfillment of prophecy. "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentile - the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." Jesus journey is marked from the beginning as a journey of light in darkness. The destination, though distant, is foreshadow by this light. But we don't have to wait for the end to start to see the light that Jesus' journey brings to the people along the way. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Jesus begins his journey by seeking companions for the road, people who can walk beside him, learn from him, experience what he experiences, and be friends, brothers, partners. He calls fishermen to follow him, to walk with him, and to share his light with others. And it ends up that it is his companions that tell his story, his journey, his light.

And though the destination was of utmost importance, Jesus' journey was just as important. It was about the people that he and his followers met along the way, the diseased and sick, the faithful and the fallen, the people who came out on mountain tops and sat in synagogues. They were the reason that Jesus was on the road, he was not just traveling from here to there, but he had a purpose for each place along the way.

And we are on the road as well, and we have found companions for our journey among the people of this congregation. A family, a band of brothers and sisters, teachers and learners, faithful and fallen. And together we may have a destination that is far off and less obvious, but together we know what is most important is the people we meet along the way. Some will walk beside us for a time, others we will only know for a moment, but together they are all neighbors whom we are called to love and serve. Some will welcome us with song and dance, and others will want care for us as long as we fit their idea of what is good and faithful, but we must walk our road, with its hills and valleys, twists and turns, mornings and afternoons and nights. But we do not walk alone. That is what it means to be part of this family, we walk together, and we walk with Christ.

Thanks be to God for the journey, may we embrace all those we meet along the way.  
Amen