

Preacher, Rev. Debbie Kidd

“GPS”

August 2006

While on AFT this year in Volk Field with the 263rd, Major Marty Dickens and I took a side trip to Minnesota to see retired Major Linda Houser. Major Dickens is a gadget person. So on this side trip to Minnesota, it was me, Major Dickens and ‘Elsa’. ‘Elsa’ is the name she has given to her newest gadget her GPS, Global Positioning System.

Major Dickens puts in where she is and where she wants to go and ‘Elsa’ plots the path, and gives detailed directions for the journey. Incredible, huh?

There was another cool thing about ‘Elsa’. Let’s suppose Major Dickens makes a wrong turn, somehow gets off the plotted course ‘Elsa’ had laid out for her, within a few seconds we would hear ‘Elsa’ say “recalculating”, (with a female German accent, I might add). This meant that ‘Elsa’ was taking the new information and recalculating how to get to the original destination from the new or current information.

Major D also told me that some of the other GPS’s tell the driver to make a U turn, get back on the original course, but not ‘Elsa’, she takes what is happening right now, puts it into the equation of recalculating what to do next.

When this happened on our trip, when I heard Elsa say ‘recalculating’, I told Major D, now that will preach...so here it goes.

There are GPS’s for automobiles and trips along the highway and there are GPS’s, God’s Positioning System, for us and our journeys. God does, or can do, for you and for me what ‘Elsa’, the Global Positioning System, did for Major Dickens...provide directions for us along our course – and - when we miss something or make a wrong turn, we ought to be listening real good...because I think you and I just might hear God say, recalculating (maybe even in a female German accent too).

You see God has provided us with a ‘gadget’, - well not really a ‘gadget’, but God has provided something for us that instructs us, directs us about our journey. We have the Bible, we have prayer, we have other people of God, various forms of GPSs...all of which can take the information we have and help us with how to get to our destination, without incident.

So, let’s talk about the destination. Yes, in some ways, we could think about the destination as being the ultimate one for all of us...heaven...at least, I hope that is your plan...it’s mine. But I want to challenge us to think of, just like when we plan a road trip to...let’s say...Disneyworld. Yes, Disneyworld is our ultimate destination, but between here and there, there is Charleston, Savannah, and a host of other sites to see, visit, and experience.

Heaven can be our ultimate destination, but there is so much for us in between here and there. Remember Jesus said, I have come so that you can have life and have a whole lot of it! John 10:10. Paul talked about us producing the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, and kindness.

A missionary was once asked about how many children he had, his reply was, “we have 8 children, and they are all living; one is in heaven and seven live here on earth.’ Heaven can be a destination, but don’t miss the living, don’t miss the journey here on earth.

The GPS that my friend Marty used would also let her plug in restaurants, tourist attractions and it would tell her how to get to those as well.

God wants us to plug in to God’s Positioning System in such a way that we do not miss anything on our journey. What do you say? Let’s have for our ultimate destination...heaven, but let’s be sure and not miss the abundant life, the love, joy, peace, kindness...the fruits along the way.

Destination determined...

Okay we’re off, the journey begins. And to quote a great theologian, Dr. Seuss and Oh, the Places You’ll Go. “You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You’re on your own. And you know what you know. And you are the one who’ll decide where to go.”

We are headed for heaven and hope to experience some of the other good stuff along the way. We have some information, but we know we do not have it all. We remember some words we heard in a sermon or words we read for ourselves in the Bible, some directions about how to do this - life. Words about loving one another, doing unto others, being devoted to one another, or what about this passage from Ephesians 4...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain unity; be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.

We go a little ways and for some reason, perhaps gradually or perhaps out of the blue, it feels like, a relationship that we value is not going well, we get hurt or we hurt someone else. The questions start. What went wrong and what do we do now?

And sometimes on this journey the relationship we seem to struggle with the most is our relationship to God. We think we have everything in place, everything we need, all the boxes checked to get us to our final destination, when something happens and we realize that we have missed another sign. We missed the one that said, love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, or the one that said, Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Hey we saw that one! Ooooh, don’t celebrate too fast, there was another part to those instructions, and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge God and God shall direct your paths.

And what about our finances, (oh you’ve gone to meddling now Chaplain). Things were going pretty well, making ends meet and then it feels like somebody moves the ends. Oh, yeah, there

was that sign from 2 Corinthians 9:7, God loves a cheerful giver, or 2 Corinthians 8:12, for if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable, according to what one has.

The story is told about a pastor who got up during a stewardship rally and said, “friends I have a marvelous announcement, we have all the money we need for the budget”. Everyone was quiet, waiting to hear what the pastor was going to say next. She said, “yes we have all the money we need, now all we have to do is give it”.

We missed the part about serving... Micah 6:8 do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with our God. Jesus gave us directions in Matthew 20:26, whoever wishes to be great, must be your servant... Jesus said just as the Son of Man came to serve, not be served – and in Matthew 10:8, Jesus says cure the sick, raise the dead; cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, now freely give.

A church member, a person that desires to follow God that is waiting to be asked to serve is just like the member of a family waiting to be invited to pull weeds in front of the house where they live.

But on this journey things happen. Again, back to Dr. Seuss, I’m sorry to say so but, sadly, it’s true that bang-ups and hang-ups can happen to you. You can get all hung up in a prickly perch. Somewhere along our course we make wrong turns. We do not follow the directions laid out for us. We missed the sign along the road.

This brings us to the recalculating, the most interesting feature of Major Dickens’s GPS. To me recalculating is what Romans 8:28 is all about... all things work together for good to those who love God and walk according to God’s purposes. All things work together for good, yes even wrong turns and dead ends. When this happens we feel lost, we feel confused.

Sometimes we get it confused, we get it backwards. Member coming forward at invitation – obviously moved to the point of tears and the man took the preacher by the hand and said, ‘my sin is full of life’.

“Somehow you’ll escape all that waiting and staying. You’ll find the bright places where Boom Bands are playing.”

It was not Elsa that messed up when Major D. In a recent conversation with my friend Marty, when I told her that I was preaching about her she said, “oh I just recently went on a trip where I could have used Elsa, but didn’t have it with me.” She had taken it into the motel room and packed it in the suitcase. We have to have the GPS with us, we have to plug in, if it’s going to work.

The sign was there, God had provided the directions for us, but we missed it.

What I know is this --- many times I have needed Elsa in my life to help me with directions on the highway. What I also know is that sometimes I need help in other areas of my life, when I have made a wrong move or missed a turn, just simply didn’t follow directions; I need to

recalculate and be reminded of God in my life. There is something else I know, God's Positioning System is Global too.