

### PASSING ON THE STORY

My father is a rather frugal man. True to his Scottish heritage, you might say. Thrifty, careful. OK, cheap. In his prime he loved saving a buck. I don't think he ever bought a stitch of clothing that wasn't on a clearance rack, so he often had things that were rather strange colors, or slightly out of style. And, in a day long before calling plans and cell phones with hundreds of minutes, a long distance phone call at our house required filling out a three-part requisition form.

OK, I exaggerate. But not by much. The truth is he did watch his pennies.

When it came to buying a new car, something I remember happening only twice in my eighteen years at home, he would shop and compare and dicker until he got the lowest possible price. Car salesmen (they were all men back then) would cave just to get rid of him! And the car he got was always the cheapest model, stripped down to the bare essentials.

One of the cars I especially remember was the 1950-something baby-blue, push-button Rambler. (If you can remember American Motors, you've been an adult for a couple of decades at least. If you remember Ramblers, your hair is probably the same color as mine. And if you call them Nash Ramblers—well, let's just say I probably refer to you as "sir" or "madam.")

Anyway, we had that old Rambler, with its big fins and copious chrome trim, for years. And every week or so we'd all pile in—Mom and Dad in the front, and my two brothers, my sister and me jammed into the back. And off we'd go.

There was always a lot of pushing and kicking. You know, "MOM! Bob punched me!" "Dad! John breathed on me!" That would go on until one of the adults would say, "'Quiet! All of you!" And then we'd settle down for a few minutes at least.

Usually we didn't know exactly where we were going. I'm not sure Mom or Dad knew either. But knowing our father we suspected that it would probably involve ice cream. And, unless the pushing and kicking and breathing had gotten out of hand, we often ended up with sugar cones—never cake, the Danners were sugar cone people to the core—sugar cones topped with vanilla or chocolate chip, or, in my case, peppermint stick. You know the kind? With the little pink and green bits of candy and a minty taste to clean your breath for a month?

I wish I could say we enjoyed those rides. I wish I could say we enjoyed the time together or appreciated the scenery, but the truth is, until we got to the ice cream stand, we were mighty restless.

I'm reminded of a *Shoe* cartoon strip I once saw.

Jeff McNally's *Shoe* is all about a group of birds that run a newspaper. One of them, an especially disheveled fish hawk known as the Professor, lives with his nephew Skyler.

In the first frame we see the Professor and Skyler driving down the highway in a big old boat of a car.

The Professor says to Skyler, "Life is a journey, not a destination."

Perplexed, Skyler asks, "What does that mean?"

The Professor responds, "It means you can stop asking 'Are we there yet?'"

That, I suspect, was a common question for the first followers of Jesus as well: Are we there yet? Are we at the point Jesus where you are going to take power, where you are going to take control and lead the revolution against the Roman occupiers? Is it time for you to declare yourself King of Israel? Are we there yet?

Even after his death and resurrection they kept asking the question. Even, as we discovered last week, even as he was preparing to ascend into heaven, they still were asking if they had arrived. But his answer is clearly no as he ascends and leaves them is clearly no. So they return to Jerusalem and wait some more. No doubt, restless. Like my siblings and me in the back seat. Wanting to know when they'd get there when they would arrive. Restless. Anxious.

But when the day of Pentecost dawns, and the Holy Spirit bursts into their awareness, there is a shift in their attitudes. For they soon discovered that this Spirit Jesus had promised them was going to be with them everywhere they went, at all times. They discover that they have a traveling companion who accompanies them even to the ends of the earth. They discover, as David said in his statement of faith, that "the Holy Spirit is with us, wherever we are." Indeed, because of the presence of God's Holy Spirit, the disciples discover the journey is the destination. And while, in one sense, they (and we) never really arrive, never really have it all perfectly figured out, in another sense, just sharing the journey of life with God *is* what it's all about.

There are those who think of Confirmation as the end of the road. But it is not, it is a mere rest stop along the way. For it has been a long journey to this point, and there are still miles to go.

Carrie helped us remember where all of this started: "From the time we were little," she said, "our parents did their best to teach us right from wrong . . . ." Indeed the journey that brings these young men and women to this Confirmation Day, started when their parents first brought them to church—even before that!

**The young people we have confirmed this morning have already discovered the value of sharing the journey. They've already realized this place and the people who call it their church home, can and do provide a community where they can live and grow. "When [I am] in God's house . . ."Mike told us, "I feel safe . . ." "Church," Kristen said, "is a place to discuss your beliefs with others . . . ."**

**And that is exactly what she and her classmates have done this year. They have explored their beliefs. And they have discovered that their work this year is just the beginning. As Dan said: "I . . . believe I have many more years of discovery left . . ." Many more indeed! For as Erin said, "life is a process and my beliefs will change throughout life, and that is OK." And Alex nailed it when he reminded us that he prefers to think of his statement of faith as his faith story. "While a statement is said and done," he said, "I can write many sequels to my story of faith as it changes throughout my life."**

**Whitney didn't know what to expect when she entered Confirmation Class. I'm not sure any of her classmates did either. No more than my siblings and I knew where the old Rambler would take us. But in time, as Whitney told us, she began to realize that "the class wasn't necessarily learning about how to become a [church] member. It was," she said, "a faith journey." And, because she came along for the ride on this part of the journey, she can say, with a real sense of accomplishment, "I have become a more defined person." And so she has. So have each one of you. And so too have every one of us who've traveled this part of the road with you: your parents, your mentors and, yes, your pastors as well. We have shared our stories of the road, our stories of the journey we call faith, with you. And you, in turn, have helped us learn a bit more about its twists and turns.**

**When we came to a rest stop on those road trips in the back seat of my Dad's Rambler, we could, as I've said, usually count on ice cream. And here at Saugatuck when we come to rest stops like Confirmation, we can usually count on Edna Yergin's cake.**

**But yummy as that is, we remember on this Pentecost Sunday that we can also count on something far more important, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.**

**And on this Confirmation Sunday, we are also reminded that there are others who travel with us— our sisters and brothers in Christ. Sisters and brothers who share not a crowded back seat, but an ever expanding, ever growing faith. So David, Kristen, Alex and Whitney, Dan, Carrie, Erin and Mike, have a piece of cake, stretch your legs, but then hop back in and make sure you're buckled up. The journey has just begun!**

**Amen  
John H. Danner**