



## Message for First Sunday in Lent

Scripture Reference: Mark 1:9-15

Greetings Saints and on behalf of Mona and myself and our worship team today, we welcome you again to All Saints and to our Lenten “Walk Home.” For those who joined us on Ash Wednesday you learned that this Lenten Season here at All Saints is going to feel a lot different than the usual Lenten trilogy of self-denial; alms, prayer, fasting. Yes, we began our journey of Lent in a good way, with a clean heart as is traditional for Ash Wednesday. But now...today, there is a “course change” coming. I am going to ask you to consider joining us for a little walk for the next couple of weeks as we engage the Season of Lent in a different way. Here at All Saints we are “Walking Home” this season and would invite you to come along. Home is different for many of us, with different visions and different feelings. *Home...our own Pat Stevens reminds us, “It conjures up memories of family and friends, warm fires, the smell of familiar foods cooking in the kitchen. Safety and security, a sense of belonging. Home is, in many ways, as much a state of mind as a geographic location. And for many of us, home also brings to mind a particular place, one that we return to after a journey.”*

“Home” ultimately is “where we live” ...different places...different spaces. We have a “home” with ourselves, with family, with community, with the Earth and with the Universe. And on our walk home here at All Saints for the next 5 weeks of Lent we will have a look at all of the “homes” that we touch and impact. We will have a good look around

while we are walking. Sometimes we will be contemplative and introspective, insightful. Sometimes we will be brilliant and sometimes we may struggle. We will make some observations and a decision or two along the way, and maybe even a change for the better. And our goal on our Walk Home this Lenten Season is just not to get home, but to make the stops along the way just a little bit better, just a little brighter, just a little more sacred because we were there. So, come along for the Walk Home. We would love your company and companionship. And we promise you this Lent, you won't have to "give up a thing."

...so today let's get started with our Walk Home to our first home that we ever occupied...ourselves. The Walk Home to "Self".

Today's Message is entitled...

## "There's Your Trouble"

So, let me set the scene for your today Blessed Ones. Picture a young guy, just into his 20's under a friendly tree in the backyard with the hood up on his bright yellow...yes yellow, 1968 Volkswagen Karmann Ghia. Now those of you who are old enough to remember back then, the Karmann Ghia was your basic, simple, air-cooled Volkswagen with a really cool body dropped down on the old, stock "beetle." The body was designed by Porche in Germany and Ghia in Italy and it was designed to look fast and sleek. Sleek it was, fast it definitely was not. I had bought it new just before I went into the Navy, paid it off with my Navy pay while I was gone, and there it was waiting for me patiently upon my return. The only thing was that it wouldn't run. It wouldn't even start. 6 years of idleness, neglect and outdoor living had apparently taken its toll. So, then fresh and confident, full of ideas and motivation I took it upon myself to bring my Ghia back to life. What I lacked in mechanical ability, experience and expertise I thought I would make up for with grit, stubbornness and sheer determination. And so, I embarked on the "resurrection of the Yellow Dog."

Armed with my Dad's tools and a Chilton repair manual and little else I began the process. New battery...of course. Hmm, still wouldn't start. New starter then...nope. Fresh oil, fresh spark plugs, fresh distributor cap...nothing. Each day, my two friendly next-door neighbors, Bill Michaels and George Hermann Ruth (not that George Hermann Ruth...the Babe) would walk by and volunteer their expertise and advice. And each day, I would stubbornly reject it. "I got this," I remember saying day after day. At first the two would kindly retreat to their own places and their own chores and let me course through the next mechanical blind alley, box canyon and dead end. Expletives flying, tools launching, with bleeding and scraped knuckles...each day the same. "Got to be the wiring," I determined. Some rodent probably chewed through the wires in the 6 years that the Yellow Dog slept peacefully in the back yard. Makes sense...so with a new wiring harness ordered and received, I began the process of installing a new nervous system into Yellow Dog.

At this point, my daily work became too much for Bill and George-Hermann and they brought their lawn chairs over and set up a kind of Elders Camp at a respectful distance from my worksite under the tree. Still within listening distance, still within advice distance, but for the most part they had some cold beers, listened, made faces and waited. The new wiring harness was an abject failure...6 days in the making. Each time one of the Elders offered, "Hey, why don't you have a look at..." I shut them down immediately with my "broken-record" response, "I got this!"

But mental, physical and emotional exhaustion was beginning to set in. I was now on Day 29 of Yellow Dog's Resurrection Journey, and it was beginning to look like he might just stay dead. Out of ideas, out of hope, motivation gone. All that I had left for my 29 days of effort was a near empty wallet, a pile of broken tools and an oily and torn Chilton repair manual. On Day 30, I ventured out to the Tree after breakfast with no

ideas and no plan. My hard-headedness, my hard-heartedness was starting to stress and crack piece by piece. Bill and George-Hermann were already under the tree that morning, having coffee and sharing a laugh and a story when I walked up. I notice that there was a third chair in place under the tree, with a box on it. On the box was written, "There's your trouble. ~ Your Neighbors, Bill and George-Hermann." "What's this?" I offered all cocky and talking-smart. They just smiled and replied, "There's your trouble." I opened the box and inside was a brand new, shiny ignition coil. They immediately saw my skeptical look and said, "Just give it a try." And so together we walked over to the Yellow Dog and they saw my hesitation. George-Hermann took the ignition coil from my hand and he and Bill went to work. In minutes the old coil was out and the new one installed, quick and efficient. George-Hermann slid into the driver's seat, pumped the gas a couple of times and twisted the key. The Yellow Dog sputtered and spit...black smoke first and then gray smoke belched from the dual exhausts. Then no smoke at all as the Yellow Dog slid into the natural rhythm of its air cooled staccato. Day 30, Resurrection Day!

Saints, in today's Gospel we have the story of Jesus in the desert for 40 days...looking for answers, looking for solutions...looking for himself his vision and his mission. But first he had to "get right," get himself straight, start the journey with a clear and clean heart. Before he could live into his call, before he could help others, Jesus had to find Home...he had to Walk Home to himself. Face his own doubts, fears, temptations, brokenness and shortcomings. But also, he had to acknowledge his potential and power for good. But even Jesus could take the journey himself, alone...the solitude of the desert, Jesus was held in the palm of Creator's hand, as we heard the Creator's Words as Jesus started his desert time "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Yes, to complete the Walk Home Saints, we have to start with ourselves. We have to get our own “head right” as we begin. Just like Jesus did, and just like I did under the tree with Yellow Dog and Bill and George-Hermann. I learned that sometimes we can’t even begin to see the problem in ourselves, the challenges, the barriers to grace that we put up and maintain. We try all kinds of solutions to try to fix what we think is keeping us from “firing up,” “turning over,” “getting started.” But often like, me under the backyard tree, we can’t see the problem and we are too hardheaded, bone-headed, proud and stubborn to ask for or to accept the help we so desperately need. We just can’t seem to shake our pride and our anger and our distrust and just say, “I can’t do this by myself, I tried, I tried everything, but nothing worked. I need you...can you please help me?” And just like Bill and George-Hermann, Creator is right there, offering us the third chair under the tree with a little box right there for the taking...the new ignition coil of Jesus and the Sacred Spirit. Once installed, bringing both us and Yellow Dog back to life. Belching the black and gray smoke of our old lives to the Wind, as we settle into the reality own resurrection and the familiar rhythm of our own engine, powering our Walk Home.

The Journey to Self can be a solitary one, Saints but it doesn’t have to be. Discovery is hard, self-assessment is the most difficult work we will ever undertake. We don’t have to go it alone, when we turn our lives over, take the help being offered the work goes smoother, faster, cleaner and just better. Creator is there, Jesus and Spirit are there, our trusted mentors, elders, and Wisdom Keepers are there right under the tree. Just waiting for you to sit down, open the box, get the repairs going and our Journey Home started.

“Here is my Beloved One, in whom I am well pleased. Amen/Aho

