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Edna and Port Lavaca

Matthew 2:12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

By Another Road

Introduction: I love road trips. When I worked at NPRU in Australia, the Director used to say that if Munro didn't drive at least a couple of hundred kilometers before breakfast, he felt deprived. That is still true. So, it is not difficult for me to think of life as a series of road trips. While the three kings traveled a road of faith and belief, I have found different roads to travel. Five different roads to be precise. Let us take a few minutes to explore them.

1. The Ego or Narcissist Road.

We are the center of the universe – the Sun around which the solar system revolves. Cute at three months, not so cute at any older age. A short road for most of us, though from time to time we may still travel it for a short distance. Isn't it interesting that Jesus, who was the center of the universe, choose to never follow that road in any direct sense – although He did say that He was the Way. During His journey as man on earth, Jesus always placed those He served at the center of His life, even through His death. When adults linger long on this Ego road they tend to see the world in self interest terms only and to sacrifice real human relationships for instrumental relations only. Let us hope that we spend little time as adults on this road.

2. The Strivers' Road.

A roadway of learning, career development, achieving. A roadway that most of us travel, some of us, for most of our lives. There is no moral problem with traveling this road unless, as General Schwarzkopf said, one becomes a careerist -- A person who sacrifices all for the sake of pursuing his career. I suspect that most of us find a balance between driving full throttle down Strivers' Road and having a satisfactory and meaningful family and personal life. If we have trouble finding that balance, age will do it for us!

3. The Power Road.

Strivers may not be motivated by power, but power is the instrument they use to achieve their ambitions. It, like striving, has no intrinsic moral problem until a person begins to see all relationships in power terms and travels the Power Road seeking to exercise power for its own sake. When that happens, we use power in the service of control. We strive to control people and events around us. Failure, in the long run, is inevitable. Whether in modest circumstances we simply seek to control our children or in more grandiose fashion we try to control a people's destiny, we are doomed to failure. God and chance (and I don't know where one begins and the other leaves off) will show us who has final control over people and events.

4. Materialism Thoroughfare.

At the junction of Power and Strivers' Roads a major thoroughfare begins – indeed, it is such a busy road that, in national terms, I am sure that it would be part of the interstate highway system. That road's name is Materialism Thoroughfare. It is as if there were a great merger of Ego, Striving and Power roads going from three lanes down to one. The competition is intense, relationships are instrumental only, the rewards, in terms of money and power gained, are immense. Road rage is the dominant emotion.

One suspects that all of us flirt with traveling this road from time to time. Who hasn't on occasion, dreamed of a fancier house, a more luxurious car, a bigger boat, a walk-in closet with 900 pairs of shoes, fill in the blank with your own fantasy. Fortunately, most of us discover two things: First, we don't really have the skills necessary for driving down that road (and I use the word skills with a modicum of sarcasm) and secondly, we find more satisfying human relationships of family, friends and community, so that we define success in more modest, inclusive and holistic terms. In other words, we are, for the most part, pretty conventional folks.

5. The Road of the Spirit.

The last road is one which we travel willingly from time to time, one which we find parallel to the other roads with frequent interchanges connecting them, one, which in the end we all travel – the Road of the Spirit.

It is an interesting road, down which we sometimes go with breath-taking speed – other times we loiter along, stopping to marvel at the sights and sounds surrounding us. The only highway patrolman is Jesus and He simply wants us to stay on the road. Enjoying love and beauty and fellowship wherever He is. And, He is everywhere! Since it is a one-way road, we look across the median at one of the other life roads. Sometimes we swerve off the Spirit to travel, for a bit, on one of other roads. Fortunately, the interchanges are frequent and fairly safe, so we may return to our drive on the Road of the Spirit at will. At our will. We need to remember that, though we may and will drive down other roads, we have the choice to driving on the road of the Spirit anytime we choose.

Conclusion: There is a wonderful poem by Robert Frost that we all know and that sums up our road choices quite well. The Road Not Taken.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sign
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

The Road of the Spirit – just a little less traveled by, but one which does make all the difference.
AMEN