

**Life is a journey on many different roads...  
Wedding sermon for Jan & Emily**

Life is a journey on many different roads...

Sometimes we lift our faces to the sun, and God is with us.

But then there is the hard journey, too – and God is still with us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. And nothing can separate us from one another as long as it is the love of God that holds us and binds us together. ...the love of a God who herself is love, nothing else but love. Love, love and love again.

It is love that leads Ruth into Naomi's family. Love for a man. And it is love which later, when Naomi and Ruth are both widowed, leads Naomi to send Ruth away and tell her to go home to where she'd come from and leave Naomi, the unfortunate old and lonely woman, alone.

It is love again that let's Ruth say No. No, I won't leave you. Don't urge me... I will stay with you and walk with you because I love you. She expresses this love for the old mother-in-law on the sad side of life with the famous sentence:

“Do not press me to leave you  
or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go;  
where you lodge, I will lodge;  
your people shall be my people,  
and your God my God.

Where you die, I will die –  
there will I be buried...”

Full of love and mutual respect for each other, and full of faith in the living God the two people in our story leave old ways and places behind and begin a new journey together. They know nothing of their future, but can feel the hand of God encircling them and holding them firm, no matter where they go.

They feel God journeying with them, as God has always been walking with his people, showing them the way and helping them to make a home:

“Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce.  
Take wives and have sons and daughters...”

And they feel God's company; God living right among them; God happening within them... God in the energy they have, in the joy and in the pain. God in the whole wide range of what it means to be human...:

“the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them as their God;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;  
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more...”

The biblical readings Emily and Jan chose show all that:

the first one shows us people committing to each others' lives and journeys, each others' destiny and future ...

the second one shows us how God encourages and strengthens his people to live even the most difficult of lives and strive for a fullness that may puzzle them at first but will eventually bless them out of all proportions.

The third reading leads us right to God and his or her great promise to live not far away but right in the middle of earthly life with all its odds, its ups and downs, its blows, its tears and pains...; and it lets us hope and believe that in the face and presence of God everything, really everything, can be made new. Even our love...

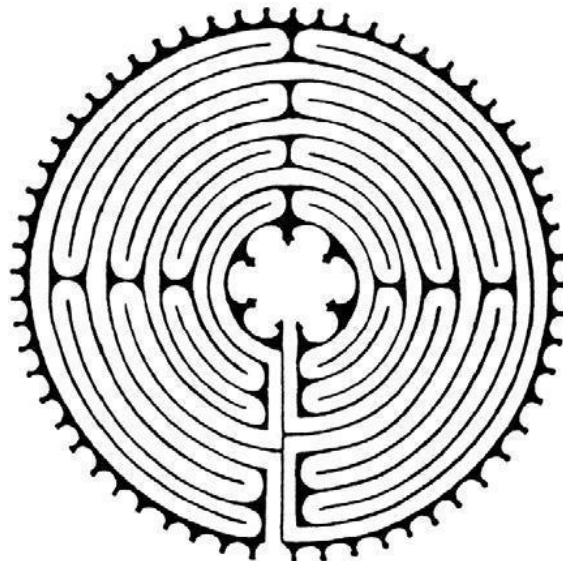
Nothing in all creation can separate us from God, a God who is with her people, dwells with them, lives right among them: God under one roof with those who believe in him. God as a comforter and healer, God as a transformer...

God as a messenger of truth and faithfulness, as the beginning and the end. God as the great parent of humankind.

What fantastic images, Emily and Jan!

God is with you, lives and loves with you, cares and heals... has always been and will always be... God to hold you, to keep you, to embrace you... God there for you on your exciting journey together... God as the source and the centre, the heart of your being...

When I thought of they can be linked came to my mind: circular labyrinth to of our life journeys. We set off together, we head in the and we know where know the centre of we know the one purpose... the one never leave, who is mind and draws us Sometimes we are sometimes we are



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we walk together, same direction, we are going... we it all, the reason; who gives us a whose circles we always on our close... far away, and ever so close.

Sometimes we are walking together and sometimes we are quite a distance away from each other. It is still the same route... still the same middle, still the same purpose... and the longer we walk the more often we experience closeness and parting, moving towards each other and walking away from each other again – not because we decide so but because the pattern of life, the pattern of the labyrinth demands it...

Have you ever walked through a labyrinth with somebody else at the same time? It is a perfect image for life and marriage. Sometimes you are so close that you can touch each other. Sometimes you are even at exactly the same spot. At other times you just walk past each other, and while you move on you realise that the

next bit of the path leads you even further away from each other... to only a path or two later be united and connected again...

The big comfort in the image of the labyrinth is that the heart at the centre, which is where each step takes us, remains the same, steady and stable, connecting the people who walk the different paths.

Even when one is on his way out of the labyrinth, and the other on her way in, there are points at which you meet and touch and merge...

The pathways of a labyrinth with the living and everlasting God at its heart are a most beautiful frame work for the idea of a life together.

A married couple is always on the move... to and fro... come closer and step back, hold fast and let go, feel nearer than near at times, and painfully far away from each other at others...

Exactly that is what love is all about.

If you love you have to let be. Not in the sense of leaving alone, but in the sense of allowing freedom, absolute and utter freedom: enabling each other to be, empowering each other to be, bringing each other into being... And by all that being connected with the love of God that offers itself to always and forever be at the centre of it all.

It is the love that does not control or mistrust, but the love that opens spaces of becoming and developing. It seeks to satisfy desires, as Catherine Keller writes in her inspiring book "On the Mystery". Love lets go and welcomes back, gives and receives... It is like a dance and must not stand still. It is a mystery that should not be entirely revealed. It is a journey into the unknown, full of images of a future of love, hope and the fullness of life.

Our actions, our experiences, all we do, lead into a divine movement that affects much more than the togetherness of two people but can influence community and society and change the world.

On your journey with and towards the living God, Emily and Jan, you can place in God's hands all you bring. Your gifts and your talents, your longings and your faith, and ask God to add the power of eternal life to make your lifelong journey together a success.

May you always be open to the loving presence of God at the centre of your life together, at the heart of your being. And may you hear God say "I am making all things new" as often as you need it in your life together.

May you always know that wherever you are on your journey – alone or together – the God who's filling your lives with love and grace and healing is at the end of every path you take. He or she is waiting there for you to take you into mighty arms, hold you fast, or let you go – just as you need it.

May you feel how you yourselves and your togetherness flow into a "divine becoming". May you see in all you live and experience the tender care of God and the divine assurance that nothing is ever lost, - no matter what.

May you continue your life journey from this day on as the glorious people you are:

may your hands be open to receive,

your hearts open to give,

and your minds and souls long to reach out to each other for ever more.

Amen.