

## **Are We There Yet? WEEK ONE July 4, 2021 FINAL VERSION**

Summer is here and it seems like everybody has travel plans.

About a month ago I took a trip with a good friend of mine.

He had just gotten a big promotion and wanted to celebrate.

After exploring several possible destinations,

he settled on South Padre Island Texas - a beach town -

which neither of us had ever been to.

Driving from the airport to the hotel,

we passed through the town of San Benito.

Ever heard of it?

Neither had I.

### **SCREEN: San Benito sign**

But this huge water tower tells you that you're in the hometown of Freddy Fender.

If that name doesn't ring a bell, maybe some of his songs might.

Freddy Fender's biggest hit was titled, "Before the Next Teardrop Falls."

In 1975 it made it to #1 on the Pop and Country charts.

I remember dancing to it at my senior prom.

Though 'dance' would be a generous description

of my moves on the gym floor that night!

But here I was last month in this place.

And that's the amazing thing about travel.

You can have surprising experiences in the most unexpected of places...

if you are open to them.

### **SCREEN: Are We There Yet? main screen**

Today we are beginning a three week message series titled,

Are We There Yet?

Now, a little explanation about the series title.

Every summer when I was a kid, our family would take a trip to the beach.

Eight of us piled into our station wagon for what seemed like

an endless journey to reach our destination.

With six kids, it didn't take long before one of us asked dad,

*“Are we there yet?”*

After about the fourth time asking, my mom would say,

*“You’ll know when we’re there so stop asking!”*

Road trips can be challenging for lots of reasons,  
the least of which is annoying siblings.

In the Gospel readings these three weeks Jesus  
is inviting us to take a trip with him.

But not just any trip: the journey of discipleship.

To any who would follow him, Jesus told them that the road of discipleship  
is not easy.

Along the way there will be ups and downs,  
joys and sorrows,  
success and setbacks.

The best way to make the journey is to prepare for surprises  
and to expect the unexpected.

But with Jesus leading the way, disciples will arrive at the final destination:  
the Kingdom of Heaven.

Okay, let’s get started.

**SCREEN: blank red background**

In today’s Gospel reading we heard that Jesus decided to  
take a trip to his hometown and he brought his disciples with him.

The days leading up to his visit were incredibly busy ones.

Jesus calmed a storm at sea, he expelled demons,  
and he cured the sick.

Last week we heard that he even raised a 12 year old girl from the dead.

After all that, he deserved a rest.

But rather than kick back and relax, Jesus kept working.

He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and taught.

And the first reaction from his neighbors sounded positive.

We heard that many who heard him were astonished.

They even seemed to praise him.

Some asked, *“Where did this man get all this?*

*What kind of wisdom has been given him?*

*What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands!”*

But then, things turned.

Some asked,

**SCREEN:** **“Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary,  
and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?**

**And are not his sisters here with us?”**

**And they took offense at him.**

They took offense at him?

For what?

Preaching, teaching, healing?

Jesus seemed to expect that this might happen.

He said, *“A prophet is not without honor except in his native place  
and among his own kin and in his own house.”*

And the passage ends with what has to be one of the saddest lines  
in the New Testament:

*Jesus was not able to perform any mighty deed there,  
apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them.*

Sad, because the people you would have expected to be the first  
to join Jesus as disciples were the first to reject him.

The hometown crowd lacked faith.

Shocking but true.

So, Jesus left.

He and his disciples set off for other towns and villages -  
places that were more open to his message and were willing to  
put their faith in Jesus.

But we have to ask the question, “Why?”

Why did Jesus’ neighbors and friends -  
the ones who knew him best - why were they the first to reject him?

**SCREEN:** blank red background

And I think back to my drive through San Benito Texas.

Nowadays, towns go out of their way to announce to the world,

*"We're special, come and see!"*

When the hometown boy or girl becomes famous,

towns celebrate, they want everyone to know.

But not Nazareth.

Why?

What kept them from seeing what so many others saw?

I think the answer is that they had very preconceived ideas

about how the savior would look and sound and act.

And Jesus - the carpenter's son from down the street -

didn't fit their image of a messiah.

They'd put God in a box, so to speak.

It shut Jesus out but also kept them locked in.

*And he was not able to work any mighty deed there because of their lack of faith.*

I wonder how often we miss seeing God at work in our lives

because we put Him in a box?

It happens when we decide that God can only come to us

in this way, at this time, in this place, or only through this person.

And what we discover in the Gospel today is that God cannot be confined or limited.

So the more we open our eyes and hearts to the possibility that

God is everywhere and can work through anyone,

the more exciting our journey of discipleship will be.

The invitation Jesus issued that day to the people in his hometown was a simple one:

**SCREEN: Come and see**

Come and see what God has in store for you.

Be willing to open your mind, expand your horizon,

and discover all that God wants to reveal to you.

Yes, the road of discipleship is not easy.

It wasn't in Jesus' day, it is not easy today.

It's truly 'the road less traveled.'

But for those who choose to follow Jesus,  
who are willing to leave the past behind and set out for somewhere new,  
Jesus promises a life of meaning and purpose  
beyond anything this world has to offer.

Not easy by any stretch.

As I said, it's a journey of ups and downs,  
joys and sorrows,  
success and setbacks.

But also surprises and powerful grace-filled moments  
when God announces, "I'm here!"

As I said when I began this message,  
summer has arrived.

These next few months are the perfect time to rest and recharge our spiritual batteries.  
So I'd like to pose one simple question to help you do that.

Ask yourself this question:

**SCREEN: Where is Jesus leading me?**

If the road of discipleship is a journey,  
where is Jesus asking you to go?

Don't settle for your life as it is now.

Don't surrender to the status quo.

Don't decide, this is as good as it gets.

God is not finished with you.

You are never there yet until you breathe your last breath.

So be open to the possibilities Christ has in store for you.

Allow God to lead you someplace new.

And it begins when you are willing to make a slight course correction  
and head in a different direction.

What might this look like for you?

Maybe it's meeting a few new people through our summer interest groups.

You can sign up today through our e-bulletin or website.

Maybe it's deciding you will take a few minutes every day this summer

to read the Bible or pray the Rosary.

Maybe it's reconnecting with a family member or friend.

**SCREEN: Are We There Yet? main screen**

Create a road map, then get started.

Don't let fear of change hold you back.

Allow Christ to lead you on a journey of discovery this summer. Amen. +