



September 13, 2017

THE STOP SIGN

Years ago, a friend of mine received a ticket for a “rolling stop” at a stop sign. “Rolling stop” is a euphemism for not really stopping. His schedule was free on the appointed court date, so he decided to go and argue the case that he had operated safely, rolling ahead for a better view of the cross street, and then going ahead because it was clear. I wonder how often we are rolling from one thing to the next, when we should be stopping?

When I attended the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, our class on Christian spiritual practices was taught by a Catholic nun. We studied the history of spiritual disciplines, including meditation, fasting, lectio divina (a kind of prayerful reading), and various kinds of worship, prayer, and contemplation for individuals and groups.

The professor had one symbol for all of these traditions: The Stop Sign—the big, modern, octagonal, bright-red stop sign. Her point was that all spiritual practices are ways of getting us to stop, to pause our lives – instead of rolling from one thing to the next. When we stop, we become grounded, we have time for gratitude and awe, and we are attentive to the presence of God around and within us.

At court, my friend (really, I’d tell you if it was me) watched the judge deal with a number of cases more serious than his. When his case was called, he had the sense that people were surprised to see someone at court about a rolling stop. A few minutes later, his day in court was over, and he was ordered to pay his ticket.

Spiritual Stop Signs are gifts from God.

Sure, we can keep rolling right through them, but it will cost us.

I’ll see you in church.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister