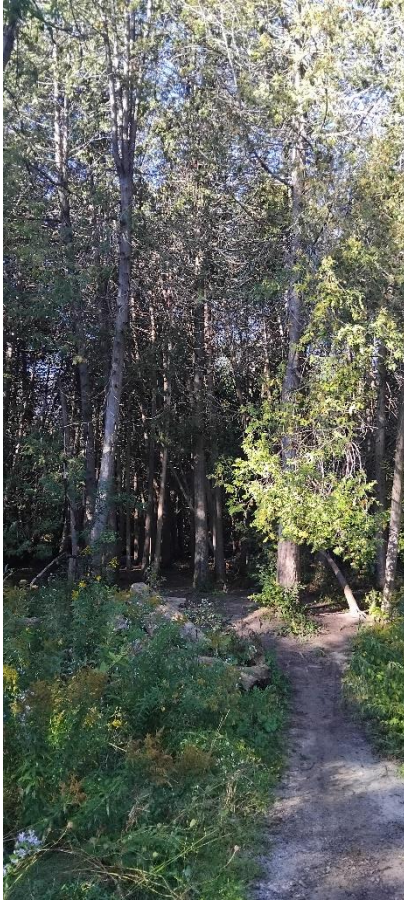




Monday Musing: September 28, 2026.
Alternates...

Often when we go into the forests on Fridays, we begin on the well-trodden paths, and then we move onto the less-used, off the beaten path, onto "the roads less travelled." While deeper in the forests, we discover old and young trees together, fallen trees with grass and moss growing through the decaying bark, and even more paths that lead to rivers and streams. It is always a time of discovery especially when we take those alternate paths.

This past weekend I have been a part of an on-line conference with people all over the world: Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, USA, Canada, and more. Together we had the opportunity to learn from biblical scholars, language scholars, ancient manuscript scholars, and oh it was so exciting! The topic of the nine plus hours of lectures and Q & A's was the Non-Canonical Writings, that is, the ancient writings of the Middle East from the first few centuries CE that were circulating, being read, some considered scriptural, some even used in the early Church's worship, some found in bibles from the first

thousand years, and yet are not in our bibles today.

Some folk believe that at the Council of Nicaea, in 325 AD, the books of the bible were decided. That is not true. The issue of that council was debating and establishing the divinity of Jesus, his essence and relationship to God the Father. The finalizing of the canon, meaning the bible, only happened around the 16th C at the Council of Trent. In the earlier years of the Church, there were other books deemed holy, sacred, inspired by God, and these books were shared, read and used sometimes in worship too. But they fell out of favour, mostly because their theology did not match the theology that was being affirmed by the orthodox teachings of the Church. These other books, epistles, and gospels, presented other ways of knowing God, Christ, the soul and spirit. Their focus was more about knowing than believing. Theirs was an alternate path.

When we walk on the alternate paths in the forest, and look through to the main paths, or rejoin them later, we get a sense of their similarities and their differences. We can enjoy both paths and each invites us to appreciate the other. The main message I received from the conference was that to truly appreciate and understand the books of our bibles today, it is important to read the other writings from the same time period, from other early Christians. Doing so invites me into an ancient conversation of

wondering and discovering the meaning of the life of Jesus, the God he knew, the God we follow in his footsteps...or do we?

Much to think about and many more ancient writings to explore...

Prayer

Holy God, as the ancients wondered and discovered for themselves
Different ways to make sense of the Christ among them,
So to do we, through the centuries and today,
Have different ways of wondering and discovering the meaning of the Christ.
May our wonderings be free enough to explore alternate paths,
May our discoveries be true enough to embrace the breadth of divine mystery,
To bring us closer to you, to each other and all the world. Amen.

Scripture this Week

Exodus 20:1-20 God gives Moses the Ten Commandments.
Psalm 19 The heavens declare the glory of God.
Philippians 3:4b-14 Paul gives his testimony.
Matthew 21:33-46 The parable of the landowner and the violent tenants.

TR Question (theological reflection)

Some of the ancients believed that as written, all knees will eventually bow to God, and that meant that even the Devil and all who were damned would eventually know salvation in God's mercy, grace and heaven. This belief is referred to as universalism. Others believed once damned, they remain damned. What do you believe? Remember, universalist beliefs would mean even Hitler and the likes would eventually know salvation.

May the invitation of the forests to let go, be the invitation, when accepted, that changes our lives allowing new birth to come,

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