

**Lenten Message Series: Signs for Life: Learning to Navigate Spiritual Living**

Feb. 26 - April 12

Series Text: Jeremiah 31:21-22a

“Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return, O Virgin Israel, return to your towns. How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter?”

**Sun., March 8: Second Sunday of Lent**

Message: Signs for Life: SPEED LIMIT

Scripture: Psalm 37:1-11 *Hymnal* #772

Text: Romans 5:3-4, “We are grateful for our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, 4 endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”

Memory Verse: “Wait for the Lord and keep His way.” -Psalm 37:34a

Blurb: The Speed Limit road sign is a spiritual reminder to travel at a speed that God prescribes, not at the speed we want. It means trusting God with our lives, a contentment to do it God’s way: not being too complacent, and not to be too impatient. This Sunday we’ll see how God’s speed is the best speed for us . . . and for those around us!

**Opening Song:** *Hymn of the Holy Spirit* -Sanctify

**Welcome** -David

**Memory Verse** -David

“Wait for the Lord and keep His way.” -Psalm 37:34a

**Worship Music** -Sanctify

*Everlasting God*

*God Will Take Care of You*

*Show Me How to Live*

Worship Prayer -Andrew

**Serve Moment:** Gideons -Andrew

**Prayers:** Gideons, God’s people suffering: salvation, coronavirus, TN tornados, children. -David

**Offering:** *The Day of the Lord (Psalm 37)* -Andrew

**Baptism:** Madeline Mae Lindholm -David

Call the kids up

Baptism - Generational discipleship

Sung prayer of blessing: *May You Run and Not Be Weary* -Andrew

**Generational Bridge:** Pilgrim’s Progress -Andrew

**Message:** Signs for Life #3: SPEED LIMIT -David

**Bumper:** Video

**Sign:** *Change sign from NO OUTLET to SPEED LIMIT during the video.*

Call to Focus: L: We are on the journey of Lent. God has given us road signs for the journey.

**P: We are on the journey of life. God has given us road signs for the journey.**

L: STOP. Stop to discern your journey. Stop to reorient your lives. Stop sinning.

**P: NO OUTLET. So many paths in life lead to nothing. We come to see clearly.**

L: SPEED LIMIT. We must take care not to travel along our path of life faster or slower than God has planned for us. God's timing is always right, even if it doesn't seem that way to us.

**P: We come to see the road signs God has placed for our life's journeys.**

**PP#1:** Signs for Life: Learning to Navigate Spiritual Living

Sign for Life: SPEED LIMIT

"We are grateful for our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope." -Romans 5:3-4

Signs for Life: Learning to Navigate Spiritual Living. SPEED LIMIT. Romans 5:3-4, "We are grateful for our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope."

**PP#2:** *Image of both STOP and NO OUTLET signs, subtitled, "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take." - Jeremiah 31:21*

This journey to Easter that we are on, we call Lent. And for our Lenten journey this year we are reflecting on how life itself is a journey, and we're drawing the spiritual connections between the road signs that we see while driving and the road signs that God places along our spiritual journeys.

Jeremiah 31:21-22a calls attention to these spiritual road signs, saying, "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return, O Virgin Israel, return to your towns. How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter?" Lent is a time to STOP and assess where we are on our journeys. If you don't have your little STOP sign to carry with you during Lent, on your key chain, or zipper, or for your mirror or laptop, be sure to pick one up at the Welcome Center.

**PP#3:** *Image of cars speeding along the highway, or in the fast lane, or zooming past a speed sign.*

Today, our sign is the one about which we most often have—how shall I put this?—"individualized instruction," by paid professionals of our fine government, usually ending with a financial commitment on our part to abide by it more faithfully in the future!

Now, we've had a full service today so far, so we need hurry this message up a bit. So, I want to hurry up and tell you all to . . . slow down!

You see, most of the time we Americans barrel through life, looking for the fast lane. Where's the action at? What can we get done today? We're busy. We've got more to do.

We want it all, right now! Instant gratification. We want things quickly. We want immediate results. And we find ourselves pressing the gas peddle in life more and more.

And as we're rushing along, out of the corner of our eye, we glimpse a SPEED LIMIT sign.

**PP#4: SPEED LIMIT**

1. We usually want to travel at a speed of our choosing

I'm talking about our spiritual journeys. We want quick results spiritually. We want our prayers answered immediately. We want the pain taken away and healing to happen right now. We want temptation's power to go away over night. We also want to stop struggling with our spiritual maturity as quickly as possible. Why do I still struggle with anger? Why do those bad words still pop to mind? Goodness, I've been working on my trust in God for so long, but I'm still so easily rattled. Why do I still have a hard time feeling at peace? Lord, grant me patience, but hurry!

If you stop and think about it for a moment, the underlying issue here for us as we journey along is obeying God's SPEED LIMIT sign. You see, we want *what* we want *when* we want it. We don't like waiting. It's not fun. It's hard. It can even be painful. And so, we want things to happen when we want them to happen.

**PP#5: *Image of two women talking in a store and a little girl throwing a fit demanding attention.***

I was at the store this week, and there were two ladies talking in the aisle. One of them had a toddler who was pulling on her mother's jacket, nagging, "Mommy, mommy, mommy! Listen to me, now! Mommy! Listen! Mommy! Mommy! Now!"

The woman calmly paused her conversation, turned to her daughter, and said, "You must be patient. I'm talking to my friend. You will have to wait until I am done."

The little girl blurted out, "But I don't want to wait. I want you to listen now. Why can't you listen to me? I want to tell you what I want. I want the candy. I want to show you now."

The mother responded, "No. I told you to wait. You must learn to wait."

At that point the woman turned to her friend and started talking again. But the little girl kept pulling on her mother's coat and demanding she be heard.

I quickly moved on not wanting to make a spectacle, but in the distance behind me, I heard a little girl start to cry.

That was an all too vivid picture of how we often are with God. We want what we want, and we want it when we want it.

Now, I'm sure that mother loved her daughter and wanted to give good things to her. But that mother also wanted her daughter to grow up, mature, and be able to deal gracefully with life. She wanted to give her daughter what she wanted, but she also wanted her daughter to grow.

SPEED LIMIT. God gives us this road sign to help guide us to a healthier, sustainable pace.

**PP#6: SPEED LIMIT**

1. We usually want to travel at a speed *of our choosing*
2. We usually want to travel at an *exciting* speed

And all that fuss was because the daughter wanted candy. You know, we're like that spiritually, too. We want the sweet stuff. We want God to do amazing things in our lives. We want to see miracles. We want to be right in the middle of God's transforming work. We want the excitement of God using us to make a measurable difference in our world.

One of the prayers that Christians sometime pray really bothers me. It's the prayer for revival. Usually we think of it as the prayer of serious Christians, praying our hearts out for God's kingdom to spread like wildfire. What's wrong with that, right? But often the language goes too far. Listen for who's in charge, who's ordering whom: "Lord God, bring revival. Bring it now. We want it, Lord. We hunger for it. Start right here. Send your Holy Spirit to blow. Light this community ablaze with your fire. We claim it, Lord!" And so forth. Earnest prayers, for sure. But can you hear how we are in a sense ordering God around? And can you detect the crossing of the line from wanting God's will, to wanting spiritually exciting things happening right here and right now around me.

**PP#7:** *Image of a person praying with a selfish desire to be used in exciting ways for God*

We really aren't content to be in the desert, when God's power seems scarce. What I don't hear from Christians who pray for revival are also prayers of willingness to be content if God doesn't do anything exciting. "Lord, I pray that if it be your will to *not* work any miracles, or *not* take this community by revival, that we will *still* be fervent in our obedience, that we will *still* be passionate about our faithfulness, that we will be consistent in our witness, nonetheless." We eagerly pray, "Lord, I give myself wholly to you so that you can use me in amazing ways for your kingdom. Let's get started right now!" And then we look around for the fireworks. But do we as eagerly pray, "Lord, I give myself wholly to you. Use me in insignificant, tedious ways for your kingdom?"

SPEED LIMIT. This road sign is a spiritual reminder to travel at a speed that God says is best for us. We may not be ready for or be able to handle what happens when we get what we ask for. It's a reminder to travel at God's speed, a pace that God knows we can handle well.

Over and over again the Bible says to "wait for the Lord." That's God's SPEED LIMIT sign.

**PP#8:** Psalm 37:1-11; Red Hymnal, page #772

Psalm 37 is one such example. Let's turn to it. You can find it in the red hymnals, on page number 772. Let's read this responsively together, and as we do, listen for how it coaches us to travel at the speed of life that God posts for us.

[Read through Psalm 37]

Verse 7 says, "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him." This waiting, this going God's speed, is ultimately a matter of trust. Do we really trust God enough to direct our lives? Verse 1 nails it. "Do not be envious of evildoers." We want to keep up with the pack, to stay abreast with everyone else. But the way everyone else is going is, verse 2, fleeting and will soon pass. Verse 3 puts the weight where it needs to go: "trust in the Lord and do good...delight yourself in the Lord." It is letting God determine the speed. And what will God do? Verse 4, "and He will give you the desires of your heart." How do you get this? Verse 5, "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this."

It is a matter of contentment in letting God set the pace. Verse 7 is where it says to wait patiently for the Lord. And watch this, the very next line: "do not get upset when someone gets ahead." Don't be jealous. Don't want what they get. Don't always want the action. Be content with God's plan. Resist living the pace of the evil world. Verse 9, for they will be cut off. "But those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land." All in good time! Verse 9, "The meek [those who let God be in control] will inherit the land; they will enjoy a surplus of peace."

**PP#9: SPEED LIMIT**

1. We usually want to travel at a speed *of our choosing*
2. We usually want to travel at an *exciting* speed
3. God provides a safe speed for you and other travelers

The SPEED LIMIT signs are posted for safety reasons, both for you and for other travelers. Sometimes we want God to let us rush through issues and resolve problems quickly. But that's not safe for us spiritually. It leads to a shallow, reckless faith, faith that is easily crashed or defeated when things don't go our way. God wants for us a robust faith, strong, able to withstand temptation and problems resiliently. You see, sometimes God's not after getting us through things quickly or answering our prayers too soon, because God is wanting us to travel at a speed that will help us grow and develop, and keep making steady progress. God wants us to progress at a pace that creates in us an obedient heart, a steady resolve that can handle the curves ahead, one that will not let us spin out of control and cause collateral damage to others who are in our lives and traveling near us.

**PP#10: *Images of famous Christians or headlines of them who have recently renounced Jesus, such as Joshua Harris and Marty Sampson.***

There have been a number of high-profile young worship leaders, authors, and influencers who have made the news in the past few months for turning their backs on God. They had enjoyed early success and recognition, and they were praising God's name for amazing blessings. Others were looking to them for guidance, modeling after them. But then, in each case, they encountered hardships that their faith was unable to withstand. They publically questioned why God didn't answer their doubts, or come to their rescue, at least as quickly as they felt God should. Their faith faltered, and they started to spin out of control spiritually. But not only that, they so publically turned their back on God that they, in a sense, crashed into others and derailed their progress, too. They were traveling to fast too soon.

**PP#11: Romans 5:3-4 "We are grateful for our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, 4 endurance produces character, and character produces hope."  
Psalm 37:34a "Wait for the Lord and keep His way."**

Paul talks about this proper slower speed in Romans 5. Verse 3, "We are grateful for our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope." God slows us down by allowing trials so that we can learn to travel at a pace that grooms us in patience, a steady trust in God no matter what we face, and a maturity to help others traveling near us. Psalm 37:34a, "Wait for the Lord and keep His way."

**PP#12: *Image for being able to give generously to God's work.***

My brother recently told me that he now values the years they spent with minimum financial income. He said those years felt endless, suffocating, constantly watching every expenditure. Others had all the toys and experiences, but they spent their vacations camping. But now their income has changed, and they are quite comfortable. He said that those lean years taught them the value of money, curbed their self indulgence, helped them focus on what is truly joy-giving, gave them the wisdom to now avoid the pitfalls of wealth, and now they are able to give to God's work at an

astounding, and deeply satisfying, level. Not only that, they are now coaching many others in how to handle money well.

Sometimes God slows us down—not answering our requests in our timing, not granting our desires as we request, not placing us in the center of really exciting spiritual happenings, making us travel roads that can only be handled at a slower speed—because God’s desire is to condition the one praying to humbly wait upon the Lord. Sometimes God wants us to slow down to let God catch up, pass, and then be able to lead the way!

**PP#13: SPEED LIMIT**

1. We usually want to travel at a speed *of our choosing*
2. We usually want to travel at an *exciting* speed
3. God provides a safe speed for you and other travelers
4. Minimum speed limits keep us moving forward

But there are also minimum speed signs, too! I often see them on the interstate. It is dangerous to travel too slowly, also, right? God gives us prodding and pushing to keep us moving, for He is not content to let us stall in our journeys, either. He does want spiritual growth, maturity, development. How are you doing on those harder struggles in your life? Are you improving? Are you more patient with your coworker? Do you take over less in conversations? Are you less easily offended? Are you more sympathetic to others? Does your anger flare less? Do you have more grace for those who have hurt you? Are you giving more? Would those who know you say you are more like Jesus than you used to be?

**PP#14: Image of cars backed up on a highway behind a car traveling too slowly.**

This can be a real problem for Christians. We get on the highway when we give our hearts to Jesus and commit to follow Him. At first we keep up and move along. But then we start rubbernecking at things along the way. We get distracted by work, or success, or hobbies, or games on our phones, or endless Facebook snippets, or saving our money for what we want. Our pace slows, and our selfishness inhibits our progress. God’s SPEED LIMIT signs tell us to *pick it up!*

**PP#15: SPEED LIMIT**

1. We usually want to travel at a speed *of our choosing*
2. We usually want to travel at an *exciting* speed
3. God provides a safe speed for you and other travelers
4. Minimum speed limits keep us moving forward
5. God’s speed allows us to engage others

One more part of traveling at God’s speed is that it is the right speed to allow us to do what God wants done. We tend to fill our lives and schedules with our own choosing. Do we have time to help someone else out? Do we have time to spend on those things that last and endure? God wants us to travel at a speed that allows us to connect with others who are traveling near us. God may have an appointment with someone else through you today. The hardest thing for us to give nowadays, is not money, but time.

Jesus did. He slowed down to touch other people’s lives. In John 4, there was a Samaritan woman from the town of Sychar that Jesus slowed down to meet. And if you know the story, you know her life was changed...but so were the lives of many people in that town that came to believe

in Jesus, because the Lord “slowed down” and went through Samaria, stopping at Sychar, touching the woman, who, in turn, touched others (John 4:39).

**PP#16:** *Image of Jesus going to Bartimaeus on the side of the road.*

Then there was that time in Luke 17 where Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to give Himself for the sins of this world. He encountered 10 lepers in a village. Although He literally was on a mission, He didn’t rush past them. He engaged them, touched them, healed them.

In Mark 10, Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho when a blind man named Bartimaeus called for the Lord to have mercy on him. Jesus made time for Him, pulled up along side, listened to him, touched him. The blind man was healed.

That was the pattern of Jesus life. He was never in too much of a hurry racing through life that He didn’t have time for other people. He ministered to others “along the way,” “as He went.” In fact, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus puts it in teaching form. The Levi and the Priest wrongfully hurried past the man lying in need. The unlikely Samaritan saw the person in need and pulled up along side him. God wants us to realize that the needs of people are important to Him, and therefore they must be more important to us.

**PP#17:** *Image suggesting we make time as God wants us to help others and/or join a grow group.*

Let me rudely shove this into your face. On Friday I had to send out an emergency email because our sign up sheet for the homeless shelter was very empty. I expect that as a church of our size, there are enough of us who can slow our speeds down just enough to spent one overnight at the shelter, so that others can be blessed. Is it convenient, no. But that’s not the point.

One more guilt trip: We are in Lent. We change our speed in order to make more time for God. We make time to be able to meet in a grow group so that we can grow spiritually with Jesus. I understand that for a few of you, a grow group can’t work this time. But we are targeting that 80% of us can slow down enough to engage the 10 Commandments in the grow groups being offered. They start this week. The sign up sheets are in the lobby. They is still plenty of room!

**PP#18:** *Image showing a speed limit sign for an upcoming curve that the driver can’t yet see.*

So, slow down to take time with God and let Him lead: that’s relationship. Love. But also travel God’s speed to make time for others: that’s ministry. Serve. Traveling at God’s recommended SPEED LIMIT: that’s learned. Grow.

Love. Grow. Serve. God’s SPEED LIMIT.

Amen.

**Closing Song:** *Even So, Come -Sanctify*

**Memory Verse** -David

“Wait for the Lord and keep His way.” -Psalm 37:34a

**Announcements** -David

-Grow Groups and St. Andrew’s Family Shelter

**Benediction** -David