**Module 9: Beyond the Jordan**

“After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel” (Joshua 1:1-2).

**Devotion**

C. F. W. Walther, father of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, but who also influenced many in the Evangelical Lutheran church in America, wrote of a pastor’s first call that it “ought to be . . . the dearest, most beautiful, and most precious spot on earth. . . . whether it is in a metropolis or in a small town, on a bleak prairie or in a clearing in the forest, in a flourishing settlement or in a desert. . . it should be a miniature paradise.” Walther could write this because in his mind no calling on earth offered so many privileges to transform lives and communities as did ministry.

In our times, the tendency is to see ministry as akin to social work, therapy, or the work of a corporate CEO. But I suspect we in rural ministry will find ourselves to be more empowered if we claim it, as the Augsburg Confession does, as an office that delivers the word and the sacraments. We offer something that social workers, therapists, and CEOs are not designated to offer: the forgiveness of sins. Where there is such forgiveness, there is also new life. Claiming this empowering identity, Walther’s rather romantic view of a first call has some plausibility. We can see rural ministry not how some in the world may judge it: some backwater, other-side-of-the-tracks hamlet, but instead as a place where God’s kingdom comes as the Word breaks in. God’s kingdom comes not just in glitzy suburbs or consciousness-raising ghettos. It also comes in backwater haunts. Since God’s grace seeks to embrace all, it also flows out to those who make their living on the land.

An important part of The Moses Project has been about being mentored. Moses mentored Joshua and for that reason he was able to lead the people into the Promised Land. Elijah mentored Elisha and so empowered his mentee to carry on his prophetic ministry. Jesus mentored his disciples and this led to the origins of the church. All these disciples built on what they had learned. They innovated. You too will innovate as you move forward in ministry, as you continue in your current call, and future calls. The adage says, grow where you are planted. There is much to love in our calls. There are always things we don’t like in our calls. But even these are opportunities for growth when we see that our parish is a means whereby God is teaching us to confront whatever growth areas we may have. In all these ways, we experience a foretaste of the feast to come.

**Prayer**

*Dear God, thank you, for the Moses Project and the cohort to which I belong. As I’ve been mentored, help me mentor. As I’ve collaborated, help me collaborate. As I have grown, help me to help others grow. May your Spirit ever guide your church and may I be ever faithful to your call. May I continue to find joy in ministry. Amen.*