

68. A ROAD LESS TRAVELED (JOHN 15:18-27;16:7,13) APRIL 13, 2014
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, KS PASTOR LEE HENDON

A ROAD LESS TRAVELED IS MOST OFTEN MORE NARROW THAN ONE FREQUENTLY TRAVELED - NOT BECAUSE IT IS MADE TO BE MORE DIFFICULT - BUT SIMPLY BECAUSE THERE IS LESS TRAFFIC ON IT. THAT WAS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN BIBLE TIMES BECAUSE MOST OF THE ROADWAYS WERE BEATEN DOWN PATHWAYS - LESS TRAFFIC, MORE NARROW. HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED YOUR CHRISTIAN JOURNEY AS A ROAD LESS TRAVELED?

I DID IN THE SUMMERS DURING MY MILLIGAN COLLEGE DAYS. I WORKED DURING THE SUMMER BREAKS FOR ATLAS CEMENT CO. IN COCOA BEACH, FLA. SOME OF THE HARDEST MANUAL LABOR I HAVE DONE. I WAS THE COLLEGE KID ON SUMMER BREAK WORK-ING WITH A CREW OF SIX OTHER ADULT MALES - NON CHURCH GOERS. THEY KNEW I WAS STUDYING TO BE A PREACHER SO THEY WOULD TAUNT & TEASE ME WITH DIRTY & CUSS FILLED JOKES & THROW GIRLY MAGAZINES IN MY LAP DURING BREAKS. I WAS YOUNG & NAÏVE & THESE THINGS WOULD EMBARRASS ME TO NO END SO THEY CHUCKLED AT MY VARIOUS SHADES OF RED. I STAYED THE COURSE & DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THEIR CARRYING-ONS - WHICH CAUSED THEM TO HECKLE ME EVEN MORE. I WAS ON A ROAD LESS TRAVELED. I FELT THE BRUNT OF THEIR REJECTION BUT WAS HAPPY TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A WITNESS.

WHEN WE STAY THE COURSE IN OUR CHRISTIAN JOURNEYS WE WILL BE HECKLED, RIDICULED, MADE FUN OF BY THOSE WHO ARE "***OF THE WORLD.***" JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES IT WOULD BE SO & WE CAN COUNT ON THIS TO BE SO MORE & MORE AS OUR CUL-TURE BECOMES EVEN MORE SECULARIZED & UNCHURCHED. BACK IN THE DAY (THE EARLY 1900'S THROUGH THE 60'S) CHURCH GOING & BEING A CHRISTIAN WAS THE EXPECTED JOURNEY TO TAKE THROUGH LIFE. BACK THEN, IT WAS THE ROAD MOST TRAVELED. CHURCHES WERE BOOMING, GROWING, GREATLY INFLUENCING THEIR COMMUNITIES. THIS CHURCH WAS BOOMING - SOME 1,000+ MEMBER RALLY DAYS HAPPENED. IT WAS VERY POPULAR TO BE A CHRISTIAN THEN - ALMOST NECESSARY TO GET AHEAD IN LIFE.

IN CASE YOU HAVE NOT NOTICED IT - THINGS HAVE

DRASTICALLY CHANGED SINCE 1980 & EVEN MORE RAPIDLY NOW. OUTSIDE GROUPS BOLDLY HAVE NON-CHURCH ACTIVITIES DURING SUNDAY MORNINGS - WEDNESDAY NIGHTS, ETC. IT IS A LITTLE DISAPPOINTING TO ME THAT THE CHURCH & ITS MEMBERS HAVE SO READILY ACQUIESCED & OFFERED SO LITTLE RESISTANCE TO THE WORLD'S TAKE OVER OF CHURCH WORSHIP TIME & VALUES. IT IS NO LONGER SO POPULAR TO BE A CHRISTIAN - THE WORLD HAS BECOME MORE SUSPICIOUS OF WHAT WE BELIEVE & CHRISTIAN VALUES. BEING A CHRISTIAN USE TO STAND FOR SOMETHING - JESUS ALERTS US - FOLLOWING HIM AS OUR LORD & SAVIOR STILL STANDS FOR A GREAT DEAL - IT IS A ROAD LESS TRAVELED & WILL BECOME MORE SO - IT IS COSTLY TO SERVE THE LORD IN THIS DAY & AGE. EXPECT "**THE WORLD**" TO INCREASINGLY HARASS, HECKLE & SOMETIMES EVEN DOWN RIGHT HATE US BECAUSE OF OUR UNIQUE & PECULIAR WAYS. FOR OUR NEW MEMBERS (LIKE THOSE IN THIS YEAR'S PASTOR CLASS) WHO ARE NEWBIES IN THE FAITH - WE MUST BEGIN TO TOUGHEN THEM UP & BE PREPARED FOR A NEW AGE OF NON-ACCEPTANCE BY THE WORLD IF THEY ARE TO TRULY FOLLOW JESUS AS LORD & SAVIOR. BEING A CHRISTIAN LOOKS -FEELS DIFFERENT - THAN BEING OF THE WORLD - IF YOU CANNOT FEEL THE DIFFERENCE & CHOSE JESUS INSTEAD - WATCH OUT - YOU MAY HAVE WANDERED DOWN AN ERRANT PATHWAY.

JESUS PUT IT LIKE THIS: THE WORLD HATED ME - THEY WILL HATE YOU; THE WORLD PERSECUTED ME - THEY WILL PERSECUTE YOU. TO MY WAY OF THINKING, THIS IS NOT SO BAD. CHEAP FAITH, CHEAP DISCIPLESHIP - IS WORTH WHAT WE PAY FOR IT - **CHEAP!** NOT WORTH MUCH AT ALL! IN FACT, IF YOUR FAITH IS NOT COST-ING YOU ANYTHING THEN YOU MIGHT EXAMINE IT TO SEE IF YOU ARE, INDEED, TRAVELING ON THE CHRISTIAN ROAD THAT IS LESS TRAVELED. WE HAVE BECOME TOO ACCUSTOM TO COMPROMISING & DILUTING OUR FAITH SO THAT WE OFTEN LOOK TOO MUCH LIKE THOSE OF THE WORLD. YIKES! PLEASE SAY IT IS NOT SO..... DO YOU STAND STRONG FOR THE TEACHINGS & COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD - DO YOU WALK AWAY FROM GOSSIP WHEN IT ERUPTS AROUND YOU - DO YOU SPEAK OF THE LORD WITH EXCITEMENT & ENTHUSIASM WHEN THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENT THEMSELVES - WE MUST LIVE OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH OUT LOUD WITH VIM & VIGOR - NO COMPROMISE OR HESITATION.

THE WORLD LOVES IT WHEN WE CAVE IN TO THE WAYS OF THE WORLD BECAUSE THEY ESCAPE THE GLARING JUDGMENT OF THE LORD & CHRISTIAN VALUES. JESUS HAS REVEALED HIMSELF AS LORD & SAVIOR THROUGH THE BIBLE & GOSPEL WITNESSING OF COUNTLESS CHURCHES & CHRISTIANS. JESUS CALL US OUT AS HIS WITNESSES. WHEN OTHER PEOPLE ARE PRESENTED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS (US TOO) THEY/WE BECOME JUDGED BY THAT OPPORTUNITY AS TO WHETHER OR NOT WE RESPOND IN FAITH TO TAKE THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED.

THE QUEST BECOMES - WHAT MAP ARE WE FOLLOWING & TO WHERE ARE WE GOING? NONE OF US ARE BORN WITH A MAP. WE BEGIN WITH BITS & PIECES OF OUR LIFE MAPPING FROM PARENTS, FAMILY & FRIENDS. ULTIMATELY THE MAP MUST BECOME OUR OWN - UNIQUE & PERSONAL TO EACH OF US - IT IS OUR OWN PERSONAL CHOICES THAT PIECE OUR LIFE JOURNEY TOGETHER. THE SOONER THE BETTER THAT WE STOP BLAMING OTHERS FOR OUR LIFE JOURNEY TO TAKE COMMAND OF OUR OWN LIFE DIRECTIONS.

AS BELIEVERS IN JESUS AS LORD & SAVIOR WE ARE NOT LEFT TO OURSELVES TO FIGURE LIFE OUT ON OUR OWN. JESUS HAS COME TO GIVE US DIRECTION TO THE PROMISED LAND OF HEAVEN ITSELF. THAT ETERNAL TRIP BEGINS WITH OUR AFFIRMATIONS OF FAITH. IT IS NOT ENOUGH THAT WE HAVE JESUS' TEACHINGS & MINISTRY REVEALED THRU THE BIBLE. JESUS SAID, "IT IS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE THAT I GO AWAY FOR IF I DO NOT GO AWAY, THE COUNSELOR WILL NOT COME TO YOU. WHEN THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH COMES HE WILL GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH." CONSIDER THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A SPIRITUAL FORESHADOWING OF GPS. HOW WE LOVE GPS! I HAVE IT ON MY HONDA GOLDWING. HONDA HAS TO KEEP UPDATING THE GPS PROGRAMMING SO I WILL NOT GET LOST. WE ARE TO CONTINUOUSLY KEEP ENLARGING, REFINING & REDEFINING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF OUR WORLD & WHAT IS TRUE & WHAT IS PHONY OR DOWN RIGHT LIES. JESUS COMES TO US THRU THE HOLY SPIRIT TO KEEP US REFRESHED & ENERGIZED TO STAY ON COURSE TO FOLLOWING HIM.

MANY TIMES A CHRISTIAN WILL COMPROMISE OR DILUTE THEIR FAITH TO AVOID THE PAIN & DISCOMFORT OF BREAKING CONNECTION WITH THE ROAD MORE TRAVELED BY THE WORLD. NO PAIN, NO PAIN - ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT THE LOSS OF

FELLOW-SHIP & CONNECTION WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS EVEN MORE PAIN. LIVING A LIFE OF TRUTH IN JESUS - GREATLY OUTWEIGHS WORLDLY DISCOMFORT. I HAVE LOST THE INNOCENCE OF MY EARLY COLLEGE DAYS - THAT'S NOT ALL SO BAD - IT HAS PREPARED ME TO BE BRAVER & MORE DETERMINED TO FOLLOW JESUS ON THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED - COME WHAT MAY - IT MATTERS NOT WHAT THE WORLD MIGHT DO TO ME OR YOU - OUR LIVES REST SECURELY IN THE HANDS OF A LOVING LORD & SAVIOR - COMFORTED BY THE PRESENCE & POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. LET US NOT BE SHAKEN!