

22. COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES (JOHN 5:9b-18) 07/22/12
 FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, PASTOR LEE HENDON

WHEN I WAS A CHILD I LOVED TO COLOR WITH CRAYONS. I HAD ALL SORTA COLORING BOOKS. MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME HOW TO COLOR. TO BEGIN WITH I WAS TO BOLDLY OUTLINE THE SUBJECT IN THE PICTURE WITH THE COLOR IT WAS TO BE. NEXT I WOULD FILL IT IN WITH THAT COLOR. WHEN COMPLETED I WOULD PRESENT MY MASTER PIECE TO HER. HER LEVEL OF APPROVAL DEPENDED ON WHETHER OR NOT I HAD STAYED **INSIDE** THE LINES OF THE PICTURE - I WOULD VERY DELIBERATELY TRY TO DO SO TO GAIN HER APPROVAL - WAS REALLY PRETTY GOOD AT IT TOO. FOR GOOD OR BAD, OUR CHILDHOOD IMAGES OF GOD COME FROM OUR PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP. I STARTED OUT THINKING I SHOULD COLOR INSIDE THE LINES OF LIFE TO PLEASE GOD. FOR ME, GOD WAS CONSTRAINING, NOT LIBERATING. (WHICH WAS NOT ALL BAD FOR THAT RAMBUNCTIOUS, ENERGETIC LITTLE BOY I WAS.) AS WE GROW UP OUR IMAGES OF GOD ARE TO GROW UP AS WELL.

ST. JOHN WROTE, "***NOW THAT DAY WAS THE SABBATH.***" JESUS HAD HEALED THE LAME MAN AT THE SHEEP GATE POOL ON THE SABBATH DAY. JESUS WAS REVEALING HIMSELF TO BE THE MESSIAH, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD. HE WAS/IS **NOT** A NATIONAL HEALTH CARE PLAN BUT **OUR SAVIOR** - TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS. IN THIS ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS, JESUS PUT THEM & US ON NOTICE THAT **HE COLORS OUTSIDE THE LINES**. THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WERE REALLY UPSET NOW, "JESUS, WHY CAN'T YOU GET IT RIGHT! COLOR INSIDE THE LINES!" JESUS WAS REVEALING GOD TO **NOT** BE CONFINED & RESTRICTED BY THE RULES & REGULATIONS, THE TRADITIONS OF THE OLD TIME RELIGION OF THE DAY - JESUS WAS GOD DOING SOMETHING TOTALLY NEW & DIFFERENT. THE MESSIAH WAS/IS NOT THE STODGY, BORING, LEGALISTIC SON OF GOD THEY/WE EXPECTED! HELLO, START YOUR ENGINES, FULL SPEED AHEAD!

SO THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS SQUARED OFF WITH THE HEALED MAN TO SAY, "IT IS NOT LAWFUL FOR YOU TO CARRY YOUR PALLET" ON THE SABBATH. CONSTRAIN, RESTRICT, STOP DOING THAT! YOU SEE, TO CARRY A PALLET CONSTITUTED WORK & IT WAS FORBIDDEN, UNLAWFUL TO WORK ON THE SABBATH - THE

ACTUAL WORDS OF THE LAW WERE: "IF ANYONE CARRIES ANYTHING FROM A PUBLIC PLACE TO A PRIVATE HOUSE ON THE SABBATH HE IS PUNISHABLE BY STONING TO DEATH." THE HEALED MAN HAD PICKED UP HIS PALLET & WALKED AT JESUS' COMMAND - BEEN PARALYZED FOR 38 YEARS, WHY YOU CAN'T DO THAT ON THE SABBATH. YOU MIGHT IMAGINE HOW ECSTATIC THE MAN MUST HAVE BEEN - HIS FIRST STEPS IN 38 YRS! EVEN AFTER A SHORT ILLNESS WE ARE ELATED TO BE WELL AGAIN. I HOPE HE WAS SINGING & DANCING, THO, THE TEXT WILL NOT BEAR THAT OUT....

THE MAN'S DEFENSE WAS THAT HE WAS MERELY DOING THAT WHICH HE HAD BEEN COMMANDED TO DO. HE DID NOT YET KNOW IT WAS JESUS BUT THAT THE ONE WHO HEALED HIM MUST HAVE HAD AUTHORITY & POWER TO DIRECT HIM TO DO SO - NO ONE ELSE HAD HAD THE POWER & AUTHORITY TO HELP HIM OVER THE LAST 38 YEARS. IT WAS JESUS WHO APPEARED TO BE THE ONE IN CONTROL NOT THEM. THEY COULD NOT ALLOW THAT - SO THEY RAINED ON HIS PARADE - WERE THE WET BLANKET AT THE PARTY. ***STOP DOING THAT RIGHT NOW!*** CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT? WITH THE IMPACT OF SUCH A MIRACLE AS THAT & ALL THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS COULD SEE WAS THAT A COMMANDMENT WAS BEING BROKEN. THEY WERE REPRESENTING THAT GOD WAS LIKE THAT - THAT GOD WANTED HIS LAW TO BE UPHELD & FOLLOWED NO MATTER WHAT - WHEN ALL THE WHILE IT WAS GOD THRU HIS SON JESUS THAT WAS DOING THE HEALING **ON THE SABBATH**. SOME KILL-JOYS WILL NOT ALLOW GOOD THINGS TO HAPPEN TO OTHERS OR THEMSELVES. WE ARE TO TAKE NOTICE THAT RATHER THAN BEING JOYFUL & PRAISING GOD THEY WERE CONDEMNING & JUDGMENTAL. I KNOW SOME PEOPLE LIKE THAT, DON'T YOU?

JESUS WAS COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES AGAIN - WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME & WOULD NOT BE THE LAST TIME. THE VERBS IN VERSE 18 ARE IMPERFECT TENSE MEANING REPEATED ACTIONS ON JESUS' PART. CLEARLY THIS STORY IS ONLY A SAMPLE OF WHAT JESUS HABITUALLY DID. JESUS WAS/IS SOMETHING NEW & DIFFER-ENT BREAKING INTO OUR WORLD OF SHADOWS & RESTRICTIONS. LET'S FACE IT TRUTHFULLY - MANY OF US ARE SO LEGALISTIC - RESTRICTIVE - CONSTRAINED - COLOR-INSIDE-THE-LINES KIND OF PEOPLE & THIS ASPECT/CHARACTERISTIC OF JESUS BOTHERS EVEN US. WHO DOES

JESUS THINK HE IS? GOD? EXACTLY!

SO THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS SHIFTED THEIR BLAME & SHAME, CONDEMNING CAMPAIGN TO JESUS RATHER THAN THE MAN. IT WAS UNLAWFUL TO HEAL ON THE SABBATH. IT WAS PERMITTED TO KEEP A PERSON ALIVE ON THE SABBATH BUT MEASURES TAKEN TO HEAL THE PERSON HAD TO WAIT FOR THE NEXT DAY. THEY GOT IN JESUS' FACE & SAID, "**STOP DOING THIS!**" IT IS HUMAN NATURE TO TRY & PUT THE BRAKES ON EVEN GOD - WHAT IF GOD GETS TOO OUT OF CONTROL MAKING US UNCOMFORTABLE - WE ARE MORE INCLINED TO STAY PUT IN OUR COMFORTABLE, FAMILIAR COLOR-INSIDE-THE-LINES STATUS QUO WAYS. JESUS HAS MORE IN STORE FOR US THAN THAT - GO AHEAD - TAKE THE CRAYON IN HAND - COLOR OUTSIDE THE LINES A BIT/A LOT - WE MUST LET OURSELVES MOVE TO THE FRESH BREEZES BLOWING OF JESUS. WE TEND TO SHOUT, "NO WE CAN'T" - ALL THE WHILE JESUS IS NUDGING US WITH, "YES, YOU CAN!" GET UP & WALK! JESUS WILL MOVE US OUT OF OUR UPTIGHT, NEUROTIC WAYS TO A NEWNESS OF LIFE. DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I AM IN LOVE WITH THIS MAN, JESUS!

JUST WHEN JESUS SHOULD HAVE COWARD DOWN TO THE THREATENING & COMMANDING PRESENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS - DID YOU NOTICE WHAT HE DID? HE TURNED IT UP MORE THAN A NOTCH - HE TURNED IT UP TO THE MAXIMUM LEVEL. "MY FATHER IS WORKING STILL & I AM WORKING AS WELL." NOT ONLY WAS JESUS HABITUALLY BREAKING THE RULES HE WAS CONTINU-OUSLY CLAIMING GOD AS HIS FATHER - HE AS GOD'S SON! THAT WAS BLASPHEMY - YEP, PUNISHABLE BY STONING TO DEATH! JESUS WAS NOW IN DOUBLE JEOPARDY!

IS THIS JESUS THE LORD OF YOUR LIVES? I MEAN REALLY! WE ARE TO CHAMPION THE SORT OF JESUS AS REVEALED BY JOHN. JESUS BREAKS THRU LEGALISTIC CONSTRAINTS THAT PREVENT PEOPLE FROM BEING FULLY HUMAN & ALIVE. UNCHURCHED PEO ARE ATTRACTED TO THIS JESUS. WHEN THE FRESH BREEZES OF THE LORD BLOW THRU OUR CHURCH & OUR LIVES NEW LIFE & ENERGY ARE IMPARTED TO CAUSE US TO GET UP FROM WHATEVER IS HOLD-ING US BACK TO WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE. MOST INSTITUTIONS & UPTIGHT, RIGID PEOPLE ARE USUALLY THREATENED BY JESUS BECAUSE HE DOES NOT READILY CONFORM TO STATUS QUO EQUILIBRIUMS. JESUS LIKES TO KEEP THINGS

STIRRED UP - WHY? 'CAUSE THAT IS THE WAY INVIGORATING LIFE IS. YOU SEE, IT IS EASIER TO JUST KEEP DOING THINGS THE SAME OLE WAY. JUST BECAUSE WE KEEP DOING THINGS THE SAME OLE WAY IN JESUS' NAME DOES NOT MEAN THAT CONSTITUTES FOLLOWING JESUS. WHEN WE BECOME SET IN OUR WAYS WE ARE TO PRESUME JESUS HAS LEFT THE BUILDING TO BRING NEWNESS OF LIFE TO OTHERS. THAT IS A LITTLE (A LOT) SCARY TO ME BECAUSE IT MAKES ME WANT TO BE MORE ALERT TO NEW WINDS BLOWING - I DO NOT WANT TO DO CHURCH - I WANT TO FOLLOW JESUS - WHATEVER THAT MEANS RIGHT NOW TODAY, IN THIS MOMENT. MOST LIKELY THAT MEANS I CANNOT, MUST NOT (YOU CANNOT, MUST NOT) STAY THE SAME!