

17. FOOD FOR LIFE (JOHN 4:31-34) 05/20/12
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, PASTOR LEE HENDON

GRADUATIONS FILL THE AIR & OUR CHURCH WITH JOY & EXCITEMENT. 46 YEARS AGO I SAT WHERE YOU HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ARE TODAY - I HAD TO SUBTRACT THE YEARS TWICE TO MAKE SURE IT WAS REALLY THAT LONG AGO - THE CLASS OF 1966. I HOPE THAT NONE OF YOU GRADUATES ARE AS **MESSED UP** AS I WAS WHEN I GRADUATED. I WAS VERY SHY & INSECURE WITH NO, ZERO, NADA SOCIAL SKILLS. I WAS A NOT SO IMPRESSIVE 5'8" AT 120 LBS. I HAD ONE THING GOING FOR ME - I WAS THE TOP OF MY CLASS IN A.C.T. MATH SCORES - THAT WAS THE ONLY REASON SOME OF THE PRETTY GIRLS IN TRIG & CALCULUS TALKED TO ME - TO GET HELP ON CLASS ASSIGNMENTS.

I WENT TO MARSHALL HIGH SCHOOL FOR 9TH & 10TH GRADES. I DATED ONE GIRL OVER THOSE TWO YEARS, LINDA & WAS SO SHY I NEVER KISSED HER BUT WE DID HOLD HANDS. THEN WE MOVED TO PHOENIX, AZ & I WENT TO TWO HIGH SCHOOLS MY JUNIOR YEAR - SUNNY SLOPE, FIRST SEMESTER & CORTEZ, SECOND SEMESTER. I WAS IN SUCH AN OBLIVION & WASTE LAND THAT I DO NOT REMEM-BER EVEN ONE CLASSMATE FROM MY JUNIOR YEAR. THEN WE MOVED BACK TO TEXAS & I WENT TO RICHLAND HIGH SCHOOL IN FT. WORTH, TX FOR MY SENIOR YEAR. I HAD ONE FRIEND, TOMMY, & FINALLY GOT MY FIRST KISS FROM CINDY. I WAS SO DETACHED FROM MY SENIOR YEAR EXPERIENCE THAT I DIDN'T HAVE MY PICTURE TAKEN FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL ANNUAL. NOT ANTI-SOCIAL, JUST SCARED, I THINK. I WAS ALMOST INVISIBLE.

THERE WERE THREE THINGS IMPORTANT TO HIGH SCHOOL KIDS BACK THEN - THEY MAY STILL BE THE SAME - ONE WAS TO HAVE A GIRL/BOY FRIEND. SECOND, TO USE THE FAMILY CAR (MANY OF YOU HAVE YOUR OWN CARS NOW). THIRD, TO HAVE SOME MONEY - SEX, CARS & MONEY. THAT PRETTY MUCH SUMMED IT UP. IN THE MIDST OF MY STORMY HIGH SCHOOL YEARS I DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE AS TO WHAT WAS REALLY IMPORTANT IN LIFE & NO IDEA AS TO WHAT I WOULD DO WITH MY LIFE - EXCEPT I FIGURED IT WOULD HAVE TO DO WITH MATH SINCE I WAS SO GOOD AT IT.

AFTER GRADUATING IN 1966 I MOVED TO COCOA, FL TO RECONNECT WITH MY DAD & TO ATTEND BREVARD JUNIOR

COLLEGE TO MAJOR IN MATH. THIS WAS THE TIME IN MY LIFE STORY WHEN THINGS FINALLY STARTED GETTING A FOCUS & FINDING SOME DIRECTION. ALL DURING MY TOPSY-TURVY HIGH SCHOOL YEARS I HAD ATTENDED & BEEN ACTIVE IN CHURCH. CHURCH WAS MY *SAFE HAVEN*. CHURCH MADE SENSE TO ME & WAS THE MAIN PLACE I FELT LOVED. *JESUS MADE SENSE TO ME*.

IT WAS IN MY FRESHMAN YEAR IN COLLEGE THAT GOD CALLED ME TO THE MINISTRY. I WAS STILL SHY & INSECURE WITH VERY LITTLE SOCIAL SKILLS - WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD GOD CALL ME TO DO SUCH A THING? WITH A CERTAINTY & CLARITY OF MIND & DETERMINATION I SAID YES TO GOD - THAT I WOULD DO GOD'S WILL FOR MY LIFE & BECOME A MINISTER - THOUGH I DID NOT HAVE A CLUE AS TO WHAT THAT MEANT OR HOW I WOULD ACCOMPLISH IT. BY BLIND FAITH I SAID YES TO GOD'S WILL & WORK - LITTLE DID I KNOW HOW THAT "YES" WOULD CAPTURE & DIRECT THE REST OF MY LIFE.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN TELLS US THAT THE DISCIPLES HAD GONE INTO TOWN TO GET LUNCH FOR JESUS. "EAT UP, JESUS," THEY SAID ON THEIR RETURN. JESUS SAID, "I HAVE FOOD TO EAT OF WHICH YOU DO NOT KNOW." THEY WONDERED AS TO WHO HAD ALREADY BROUGHT JESUS FOOD TO WHICH JESUS REPLIED, "MY FOOD IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME & TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK." **GRADUATES**, THE MOST IMPORTANT FOOD FOR YOUR LIFE IS THE SAME - TO DO THE WILL OF GOD & ACCOMPLISH GOD'S WORK IN YOUR LIFE. LITTLE DID I KNOW BUT I HAD SETTLED THAT ISSUE FOR MY LIFE IN MY FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE WHEN I CHANGED DIRECTION TO GO TO A BIBLE COLLEGE TO BECOME A MINISTER. PERHAPS WE NEVER REALLY FEEL WORTHY OF DOING GOD'S WILL BUT GOD TAKES WHO WE ARE & MAKES US BETTER THAN WE ARE FOR GOD'S PURPOSES. GOD TAKES OUR BOO-HOOS & TURNS THEM INTO JOY & VICTORY.

WHAT WILL BE YOUR FOOD FOR LIFE? WHEREIN WILL YOU FIND YOUR NOURISHMENT? I HAVE COME A LONG WAY IN LIFE, *THANKS BE TO GOD* - I HAVE A GIRL, A CAR (A MOTORCYCLE) & SOME MONEY - BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY I CONTINUE TO SEEK TO SAY YES TO GOD'S WILL & ACCOMPLISH GOD'S INTENDED WORK FOR MY LIFE. THAT IS THE MOST, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR YOU IN YOUR LIFE - TO DO GOD'S WILL & WORK FOR YOUR LIFE. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A MINISTER TO DO THAT BUT

MUST, MUST DO SO IN WHATEVER YOUR CHOSEN DIRECTION IN LIFE WILL BE. NOTHING IN LIFE YOU ENCOUNTER CAN OVERCOME YOU IF YOU ARE DOING GOD'S WILL & WORK. WHEN WE ARE DOING GOD'S WILL & WORK ALL KINDS OF DOORS OPEN UP TO US & WE ARE TRULY BLESSED!

PLEASE, DO NOT GET IN A HUFF & PUFF ABOUT IT OR BE PARANOID ABOUT GOD'S WILL & DIRECTION FOR YOUR LIFE IF IT IS NOT CLEAR TO YOU RIGHT NOW. GOD WILL COME TO YOU - BE OPEN - AVAILABLE - RESPONSIVE TO GOD WHEN GOD COMES A'KNOCKING. I AM REMINDED OF ELIJAH'S JOURNEY AS A PROPHET WHEN HE WAS SEEKING GOD'S WILL & DIRECTION. GOD SENT ELIJAH TO THE TOP OF MT. HOREB. THERE HE EXPERIENCED A WHIRLWIND, A HORRENDOUS EARTHQUAKE FOLLOWED BY AN ALL CONSUMING FIRE & THEN A GENTLE WHISPER. GOD CAME TO ELIJAH IN THE GENTLE WHISPER. GOD CAME TO ME IN A GENTLE WHISPER - GOD WILL COME TO YOU JUST BE LISTENING & ALERT - IN A WHIRLWIND, EARTHQUAKE, FIRE OR WHISPER - **GOD WILL COME TO YOU.**

I ADMIT THAT GOD'S GENTLE WHISPER TOOK ABOUT NINE MONTHS TO CONVICT ME - I STUBBORNLY HAD MY MIND'S EYE SET ON BEING A MATHEMATICIAN. BUT I WILL TELL YOU THIS, UNTIL GOD FINDS GOD'S WAY WITH YOU, YR LIFE WILL NOT BE CONTENT NO MATTER YOUR SUCCESS. IT IS NOT IN THE GIRLS, THE CARS OR THE CASH - NOT IN THE THINGS THAT THE WORLD HAS TO OFFER THAT YOU WILL FIND YOUR FOOD FOR LIFE. IT WILL BE IN GOD'S WILL & WORK.

I HAVE ON MY OFFICE DOOR THIS LITTLE DOVE'S CHOCOLATE WRAPPER THAT READS, "***LIFE WITHOUT CHOCOLATE IS TOO TERRI-BLE TO CONTEMPLATE.***" I DO LOVE DARK CHOCOLATE, SO YUMMY & DELICIOUS! IT IS SO GOOD FOR US TOO BECAUSE CHOCOLATE IS DERIVED FROM CACAO BEANS - BEANS = VEGETABLE. IF YOU EAT A CHOCOLATE BAR BEFORE EACH MEAL, IT WILL TAKE THE EDGE OFF YOUR APPETITE & YOU'LL EAT LESS - WHAT A GREAT IDEA FOR WEIGHT LOSS.... BUT REALLY, I CAN IMAGINE LIFE WITHOUT DARK CHOCOLATE BUT I TRULY CANNOT CONTEMPLATE LIFE WITHOUT JESUS. **JESUS IS TRULY OUR FOOD FOR LIFE.**

PHILLIP YANCEY STRUGGLED WITH THIS IDEA IN HIS BOOK ENTITLED, REACHING FOR THE INVISIBLE GOD. HE WROTE: "I

OFFER NO GUARANTEED METHOD TO OBTAIN GOD'S PRESENCE, FOR GOD ALONE GOVERNS THAT. SOLITUDE & SILENCE MERELY SUPPLY THE STATE MOST CONDUCTIVE TO ATTENDING TO THE STILL SMALL VOICE OF GOD... C. S. LEWIS (ONCE SAID) THAT HE CANNOT GIVE ADVICE ON PURSUING GOD, HAVING NEVER HAD THAT EXPERIENCE. 'IT WAS THE OTHER WAY ROUND; HE (GOD) WAS THE HUNTER (OR SO IT SEEMED TO ME) AND I WAS THE DEER... "'

FINDING GOD IS REALLY JUST A MATTER OF ALLOWING OURSELVES TO BE FOUND, IF WE WILL ONLY STOP & LISTEN. LISTEN! CAN YOU HEAR IT? THERE IN THE DISTANCE. THERE IT IS. IT IS THE FAINT BAYING OF THE HOUND OF HEAVEN OR PERHAPS IN THE WHISPER OF THE WIND. FIND YOUR SUCCESS, YOUR FOOD FOR LIFE IN DOING THE WILL & WORK OF GOD. CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL YOU GRADUATES!!!