

11. THE GOSPEL IN MINIATURE (JOHN 3:16-18) 03/18/12  
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, PASTOR LEE HENDON

THIS BIBLE PASSAGE FROM JOHN TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY - IT JUST CANNOT BE CAPTURED OR IMPROVED UPON - REALLY KINDA DEFIES BEING PREACHED ON - BUT I AM GONNA GIVE IT A TRY! JOHN 3:16 HAS BEEN CALLED, "EVERYBODY'S TEXT." IN THE THROWS OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION, MARTIN LUTHER SAID IT WAS "THE GOSPEL IN MINIATURE." LET US TAKE A LOOK SEE AT THE "3 P'S" OF THIS PICTURE OF GOD. IT IS A PICTURE OF HOW GOD RUNS GOD'S CREATED ORDER.

THE FIRST P IS PURPOSE. GOD'S PURPOSE IS VERY EXPLICIT - SALVATION. "SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, NOT TO CONDEMN THE WORLD BUT THAT THE WORLD MIGHT B SAVED." I THINK PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR THIS - "GOD IS ON OUR SIDE." EMPHATICALLY! GOD IS THE BIG, BIG, BIG BOSS & GOD IS PULLING FOR US - INDIVIDUALLY & PERSONALLY. IN FACT, GOD HAS SET UP THIS WHOLE CHRISTIAN FAITH THING JUST FOR THE PURPOSE OF SAVING OUR SOULS. WHY IS IT WE CAN SO EASILY GET ALL HYPED-UP ON THE DAMNATION OF SOULS & HOW EVERYBODY IS GOING TO HELL WHEN ALL THE WHILE, GOD IS HYPED-UP ON SAVING SOULS? WE CAN FIND IT SO DIFFICULT & AWKWARD TO ACTUALLY BELIEVE, THAT, YES, GOD HAS A BURNING DESIRE DEEP IN GOD'S HEART THAT YOU/ME/OTHERS BE SAVED. IN FACT, & FOR THE RECORD, IF GOD HAD IT GOD'S WAY, EVERYONE WOULD BE SAVED!

SO WHAT THWARTS GOD'S PURPOSE? WHY NOT JUST PRO-CLAIM EVERYONE SAVED & BE DONE WITH IT? BECAUSE GOD WILL NOT PLAY GOD & ROB US OF OUR OWN FREE WILL OF CHOICE. IT IS A PAINFUL & HORRIFYING EXPERIENCE OF LIFE, THAT SOME CHOSE TO BELIEVE IN JESUS WHILE OTHERS THRU THEIR OWN CHOICE (NOT GOD'S) SOME CHOSE TO NOT BELIEVE. BUT EVEN THEN, THE PURPOSE OF GOD IS THAT EVERYONE BE SAVED.

THE SECOND "P" OF OUR PICTURE OF GOD IS PRODUCT. EXACTLY WHAT DOES GOD & CONSEQUENTLY WE AS GOD'S CH HAVE TO OFFER - WHAT IS OUR PRODUCT? WE MIGHT READILY SAY OUR PRODUCT IS GOD'S LOVE. WELL, HOW NICE, BUT A LITTLE OUT OF FOCUS. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN SHARPENS OUR

PRODUCT DESIGN - "GOD SO **LOVED**." THERE IS A POINT & TIME IN HISTORY THAT GOD SHAPED LOVE TO BE A **VERB** IN ACTION, A HAPPENING, AN EVENT. GOD **LOVED** THE WORLD NOT VAGUELY, LIKE WE MIGHT USUALLY MEAN IT, BUT GOD **LOVED** THE WORLD WITH AN EMPHATIC CLARITY THAT SET THE STANDARD FOR OUR LOVING. IN JESUS, GOD DEMONSTRATED THRU LIFE & DEED WHAT GOD'S LOVE IS ALL ABT. THIS LIFE & DEED IS TO BE SHOWN & DEMONSTRATED THRU OUR OWN LIVES - WE CAN TREAT ANYBODY ANY WAY WE WANT TO - JUST SO IT IS IN LOVE - THAT PUTS THE BRAKES ON MUCH OF OUR BEHAVIOR.

THERE IS A DEMAND FOR THIS **PRODUCT**! AS THE SONGSTER SPUN, "WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW IS LOVE SWEET LOVE, THAT'S THE ONLY THING THAT THERE'S JUST TOO LITTLE OF." INDEED, IT IS LOVE & THE DESIRE FOR LOVE THAT MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND, ISN'T IT? NOT CASH, POWER, SUCCESS, SEX OR MORE TOYS. WHEN THE NIGHT BECOMES STILL, DARK & QUIET & A PERSON IS LEFT TO HIM/HERSELF, THE CRISIS OF THE HEART SETS IN - AM I TRULY, TRULY LOVED? ALL ELSE PALES TO THE HORROR & DAMNATION OF AN EMPTY HEART! WE MUST ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS (DID I SAY ALWAYS) ERROR ON THE SIDE OF LOVE. WHY? **BECAUSE THAT IS THE WAY GOD IS.....**

WE ARE IN THE "**LOVE**" BUSINESS - NOW, RECALL, LOVE IS NOT A **NOUN** THAT CAN BE HANDED OUT LIKE CANDY BUT A **VERB** THAT HAS TO BE DEMONSTRATED BY US IN OUR LIVES BY THE WAY IN WHICH WE TREAT ONE ANOTHER. ALWAYS ASK - CAN I FEEL THE LOVE HERE? IF NOT, THEN DEMONSTRATE IT.

GOD'S LOVE IS SHOWN TO US THRU THE SAVING EVENT OF THE CROSS OF JESUS - IT IS UNCONDITIONAL - NO STRINGS ATTACHED, REALLY! LET THAT SOAK IN, U-C-O-N-D-I-T-I-O-N-A-L! THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO OR SAY THAT WILL TAKE GOD'S LOVE AWAY - EVEN IF WE NAIL HIS SON TO A CROSS! THRU GOD'S LOVE EVERYTHING IS MADE RIGHT. THAT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S LOVE - TO RESTORE US TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM BECAUSE WE CAN NEVER DO IT BY OURSELVES. NO MATTER HOW SHAMEFUL WE ARE OR MIGHT BE OR HAVE BEEN, GOD CONTINUES TO LOVE US.

THE THIRD "**P**" OF OUR PICTURE OF GOD IS **PROSPECTS**. WHO ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR GOD'S ADVENTURE OF LOVE? JOHN STATES THAT THE PROSPECTS ARE THE WORLD. GOD SHOWS NO

FAVORITISM (WHICH WAS PERPLEXING TO THE JEWS & SOME CHRISTIANS TODAY) NO FAVORITISM BECAUSE THE WORLD & EVERYONE IN IT IS GOD'S - ONLY ONE SHEEP & ONE SHEPHERD.

PROSPECTING IS THE NAME OF THE GAME FOR OUR SUCCESS IN SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS. NOT PURPOSE, NOT PRODUCT - PRODUCT CAN SIT ON THE SHELF UNTIL IT DRIES UP TO BLOW AWAY IN THE WIND. WE MUST SEE THE PEOPLE - PROSPECTS. THE CHURCH, THIS CHURCH, CANNOT BE CONTENT TO REST ON THE ECSTASY OF ITS OWN SALVATION. WE MUST LOVE IN DEED & ACTION AS GOD HAS SO LOVED. GOD STILL HAS A LOT OF LOVING TO DO THRU US!

ONE SUNDAY MORNING A PASTOR CAME TO THE CHURCH CARRYING A WORN, BENT, OLD BIRD CAGE & SET IT BY THE PULPIT. SEVERAL EYEBROWS RAISED & IN RESPONSE THE PASTOR SAID, "I WAS WALKING THRU TOWN YESTERDAY WHEN I SAW A YOUNG BOY COMING TOWARD ME SWINGING THIS BIRD CAGE. ON THE BOTTOM WERE 3 LITTLE WILD BIRDS, SHIVERING WITH COLD & FRIGHT. I STOPPED THE LAD & ASKED, "WHAT YOU GOT SON?"

"JUST SOME OLD BIRDS," HE REPLIED.

"WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THEM?"

THE BOY SAID, "TAKE 'EM HOME & HAVE SOME FUN WITH 'EM. PULL THEIR FEATHERS OUT TO MAKE THEM FIGHT. GONNA HAVE A REAL GOOD TIME!"

"WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU GET TIRED OF THEM?"

"OH, I GOT SOME CATS," SAID THE LITTLE BOY. "THEY LIKE TO EAT BIRDS."

THE PASTOR WAS SILENT & THEN, "HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT FOR THOSE BIRDS, SON?"

"HUH? WHY YOU DON'T WANT THEM BIRDS, MISTER. THEY ARE JUST PLAIN OLD FIELD BIRDS. DON'T SING, NOT EVEN PRETTY."

"HOW MUCH?" THE PASTOR ASKED AGAIN. THE BOY THOUGHT HE WAS CRAZY & SNAPPED BACK, "\$10."

THE PASTOR QUICKLY PUT A 10 DOLLAR BILL IN HIS HAND. IN A FLASH THE BOY WAS GONE. THE PASTOR LET THE BIRDS GO FREE IN A GRASSY SPOT. THAT EXPLAINED THE EMPTY CAGE. THEN THE PASTOR SAID, "ONE DAY SATAN & JESUS WERE HAVING A TALK. SATAN HAD JUST COME FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN & WAS GLOATING & BOASTING OVER THE WORLD FULL OF PEOPLE HE HAD

CAPTURED. HOW GULLIBLE THOSE HUMANS ARE....”

JESUS ASKED, “WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO W/ THEM NOW?”

SATAN SAID, “OH, HAVE FUN WITH THEM! TEACH THEM HOW TO HATE & ABUSE EACH OTHER. HOW TO INVENT GUNS & BOMBS & KILL EACH OTHER. HOW FUN THAT WILL BE!”

“HOW MUCH YOU WANT FOR THEM?”

“OH, YOU DON’T WANT THESE PEOPLE. THEY AIN’T NO GOOD. THEY WOULD JUST HATE YOU, SPIT ON YOU, CURSE YOU, EVEN KILL YOU! YOU DON’T WANT THEM....”

“HOW MUCH?” JESUS PERSISTED.

SATAN LOOKED AT JESUS & SNEERED, “ALL YOUR TEARS & ALL YOUR BLOOD.”

JESUS SIGHED, “DONE!” THEN HE PAID THE PRICE.

***FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT GOD GAVE HIS ONLY SON THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. THANK YOU JESUS!***