

13. JESUS, THE REAL DEAL (JOHN 3:25-36) 04/15/12  
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, PASTOR LEE HENDON

WHAT A JOYFUL DAY WE HAD ON PALM SUNDAY WHEN WE BAPTIZED TWELVE LITTLE ANGEL GIRLS! YES, THEY WERE ANGELS & STILL ARE! I HAD THE BEST PLACE IN THE HOUSE TO SEE THEIR BEAMING SMILES & JOYFUL EXPRESSIONS ON THEIR FACES AS THEY POPPED OUT OF THE BAPTISMAL WATER - EACH GIRL HAD THIS LOOK OF GLEE & JOY AS THEY EMERGED FROM THE WATER - **BING!** THEY HAD **WOW** LOOKS ON THEIR FACES.

THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS SPECIALIZED IN BAPTISM - GIVING NEW LIFE TO THOSE WHO HAVE ACCEPTED JESUS AS THEIR LORD & SAVIOR. THE FIRST ONE TO SPECIALIZE IN BAPTISM WAS JOHN - HE CAME ON THE SCENE BAPTIZING CONVERTS BY THE THOUSANDS. IT HAD BEEN OVER 500 YEARS SINCE A PROPHET LIKE JOHN HAD APPEARED ON THE JEWISH SCENE. **5-0-0 Y-E-A-R-S** - THAT IS A LONG, LONG DROUGHT FOR A RELIGIOUS REVIVAL! JOHN'S BAPTISM WAS ONE OF **REPENTANCE** - NOT YET CHRISTIAN BAPTISM WHICH IS OF THE SPIRIT & A PARTICIPATION IN THE DEATH, BURIAL & RESURREC-TION OF JESUS. JOHN'S FOLLOWERS HAD GROWN BY LEAPS & BOUNDS - A SPECTACULAR RELIGIOUS REVIVAL. JOHN WAS THE TALK OF THE LAND!

JOHN'S DISCIPLES BECAME JEALOUS & FEARFUL ABOUT JESUS' EARLY SUCCESS. THEY SAID, "**ALL YOUR FOLLOWERS ARE GOING TO JESUS.**" NO MATTER OUR PLACES IN THE PECKING ORDER WE DO TEND TO GET ENVIOUS & JEALOUS WHEN OTHER PEOPLE SUCCEED AT OUR EXPENSE. JOHN'S FOLLOWING WAS RAPIDLY DECLINING AS THE MASSES OF PEOPLE BEGAN TO TURN TO JESUS AS THE NEW GODLY RAGE OF THE LAND. IF JOHN CONTINUED TO DECLINE HIS MOVEMENT MIGHT COME TO AN END - WHAT A FRIGHT TO THOSE IN HIS ORGANIZATION!

JOHN KNEW WELL WHAT WAS GOING ON, HE SAID, "**NO ONE CAN RECEIVE ANYTHING EXCEPT WHAT IS GIVEN HIM FROM HEAVEN.**" THAT WAS TO SAY, THINGS WERE GOING THE WAY, THE DIRECTION GOD MEANT FOR IT TO GO - JESUS WAS A GOD THING! HE ADDED MATTER-OF-FACTLY, "**HE MUST INCREASE BUT I MUST DECREASE.**" JOHN WAS SUCH A GODLY MAN THAT HE REJOICED AT JESUS' EARLY SUCCESS. IN FACT, JOHN KNEW HIS ULTIMATE SUCCESS IN HIS MINISTRY WOULD BE VALIDATED BY JESUS' EARLY

& CONTINUED SUCCESS - FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, JOHN'S MINISTRY WAS ALL ABOUT PREPARING THE WAY FOR JESUS.

THAT, TOO, IS OUR TASK - TO WILLINGLY GET OURSELVES OUT OF THE WAY TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS TO BE RECEIVED BY OTHER PEOPLE. WE ARE TO ALWAYS TAKE THE BACK SEAT TO THE GLORY & PURPOSE OF JESUS. ALL THAT WE DO - S.S., WORSHIP, YOUTH GROUPS, BIBLE STUDIES, MINISTRY TEAMS, THESE BUILDINGS - ALL THIS IS NOT ABOUT OURSELVES & WHAT WE HAVE DONE BUT ABOUT LEADING OTHERS TO JESUS. LIKE WITH JOHN, OUR SUCCESS IS DETERMINED BY JESUS BEING MORE & MORE REVEALED TO OTHER PEOPLE. IT CAN BE OH SO DIFFICULT TO KEEP OUR EGOS OUT OF THE WAY SO THAT THE GLORY OF JESUS WILL SHINE THROUGH - WHAT WE ARE DOING HERE HAS NEVER BEEN ABOUT US AS THE CHURCH BUT ABOUT JESUS AS LORD & SAVIOR. OFTEN TIMES WHEN WE BECOME TIRED & WORN DOWN IT IS BECAUSE FOR THE MOMENT WE HAVE LOST SIGHT OF THAT - IT IS ALL ABOUT JESUS - NOT OURSELVES.

SUCH IS THE CORNERSTONE OF WHO WE ARE AS (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) - **THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS** - IN ALL THINGS. JESUS, IS THE REAL DEAL! NOTHING NEED BE ADDED TO OR TAKEN AWAY FROM OUR WITNESSING TO HIM. POINTING THE WAY TO JESUS IS SOMETHING WE NEVER, EVER NEED TO BE HESITANT OR APOLO-GETIC ABOUT. THE CHURCH & OUR PROGRAMS WILL ALWAYS BE RIDDLED BY HUMAN FRAILTY & SIN - EXPECT IT. JOHN THE BAPTIST KNEW HE WAS NOT HIMSELF THE REAL DEAL - BUT HE KNEW JESUS WAS! WE ARE NOT THE REAL DEAL - BUT JESUS IS!

MAX LUCADO INTRODUCES THE MATTER TO US LIKE THIS IN HIS BOOK OUR NEXT-DOOR SAVIOR: "TO KEEP US OCCUPIED (IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL), THE TEACHER WOULD PASS OUT DRAW-INGS WITH THE QUESTION AT THE BOTTOM, 'WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?' REMEMBER THEM? WE'D LOOK CLOSELY FOR SOMETHING THAT DIDN'T FIT. A FARMYARD SCENE WITH A PIANO NEAR THE WATER TROUGH. A CLASSROOM WITH A PIRATE SEATED ON THE BACK ROW. AN ASTRONAUT ON THE MOON WITH A PAY PHONE IN THE BACKGROUND. WE'D PONDER THE PICTURE & POINT TO THE PIANO OR PIRATE OR PAY PHONE & SAY, 'THIS DOESN'T FIT.' SOMETHING IS OUT OF PLACE. PIANOS DON'T BELONG IN FARM-YARDS. PIRATES DON'T SIT IN CLASSROOMS. PAY PHONES AREN'T FOUND ON THE MOON & GOD

DOESN'T CHUM WITH THE COMMON FOLK OR SNOOZE IN FISHING BOATS." GOD DOESN'T FIT ON EARTH.

OH, YES, GOD DOES - JESUS IS GOD FROM ABOVE.

JESUS COMES FROM HEAVEN - DOWN TO EARTH.

JESUS IS NOT A MEASURE OF GOD BUT GOD'S FULLNESS!

JESUS IS **THE REAL-DEAL** & BELONGS FRONT & CENTER IN THE WAY WE PAINT OUR LIVES. WE APPLAUD JOHN THE BAPTIST FOR DOING GREAT THINGS - FOR STIRRING THE LAND WITH RELIGIOUS REVIVAL. JOHN DID GODLY THINGS BUT WAS NOT GOD. JESUS WAS A MAN WHO DID GODLY THINGS BECAUSE HE WAS GOD - AS JOHN SAID, "NOT A MEASURE OF GOD BUT THE FULLNESS OF GOD." WHICH IS TO SAY, GOD HAS PUT GOD'S SELF TOTALLY INTO OUR WORLDLY, HUMAN EXPERIENCES WITH JESUS - HAS HELD NOTHING OF GOD'S DIVINITY BACK - ALL IN, ALL IN.

WITHOUT EXCEPTION, JESUS WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PERSON WHO EVER LIVED. WE CANNOT, MUST NOT IGNORE HIM. FORGET MVP, JESUS IS A LEAGUE UNTO HIMSELF. HEAD OF THE PARADE? HARDLY - NO ONE ELSE SHARES THE ST. WHO COMES CLOSE? HUMANITY'S BEST & BRIGHTEST FADE LIKE DIME-STORE RUBIES NEXT TO HIM. AS GOD-MAN, JESUS IS THE REAL DEAL!

THE JEWEL OF THE NILE OF THE CHURCH IS JESUS. NOT MONEY IN THE BANK - THOUGH IT IS NICE TO HAVE. NOT CARS OR MOTORCYCLES IN THE GARAGE - THOUGH THEY ARE FUN TO RIDE. NOT A HEALTHY BODY OR A BETTER SELF-IMAGE, THOUGH THESE GIVE US SOME PLEASURE. THE FORT KNOX OF FAITH IS JESUS. FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS. WALKING WITH JESUS. THE HEART BEATING REALITY IS THAT IN JESUS WE ARE PART OF SOMETHING ANCIENT, ENDLESS, UNSTOPPABLE & UNFATHOMABLE. THE PERSON OF JESUS HAS BECOME THE DIVIDING REALITY FOR ALL HUMAN HISTORY. BELIEF IN JESUS HAS BECOME THE DIVIDING REALITY FOR ALL HUMAN EXPERIENCES. ALL ELSE PALES IN COMPARISON & ARE BUT CHEAP COUNTERFEITS & IMPOSTERS!

OUR WORK TOGETHER & OUR MINISTRY TOGETHER AS BELIEVERS IS OF DIVINE MEGA BILLION PROPORTIONS - DIVIDING ETERNAL LIFE FROM GOD'S WRATH. HAVING THE WINNING POWER BALL TICKET PALES IN COMPARISON - THOUGH WE OFTEN TIMES DO NOT GIVE SUCH ATTENTION & APPRECIATION TO OUR LORD. AFTER ALL, THERE WILL BE ANOTHER SUNDAY OR ANOTHER OFFERING TO MAKE - LATER, JESUS. SUCH CONTEMPT &

PRESUMPTION ROB US OF VITALITY & ENTHUSIASM FOR OUR FAITH. JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE CHURCH TRENCHES OF LIFE, HO-HUM IN GEAR.

HOW TO KEEP THE SPARKLE & SHINE IN OUR FAITH IN JESUS IS A WORTHY & WORTHWHILE ADVENTURE. TO KEEP THAT **WOW** FACTOR LOOK OF JOY ON OUR FACES LIKE THOSE TWELVE LITTLE ANGEL GIRLS JUST BAPTIZED. TO COME OUT OF THE BAPTISMAL WATERS WITH A BRIGHT **BING!**-COURTENANCE ALL ABOUT US. YES, WE CAN LIVE ON THAT KIND OF FAITH-HIGH BECAUSE JESUS IS THE REAL-DEAL & IT IS ALL ABOUT HIM FOREVERMORE..... ONLY JESUS CAN DO WHAT JESUS DOES! LET HIM LIVE IN YOU!