

12. STEP INTO THE LIGHT (JOHN 3:19-21) 03/25/12
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, PASTOR LEE HENDON

LONG AGO, OR MAYBE NOT SO LONG AGO, THERE WAS A TRIBE IN A DARK, COLD CAVERN. THE CAVE DWELLERS WOULD HUDDLE TOGETHER & CRY AGAINST THE COLD. LOUD & LONG THEY WAILED. IT WAS ALL THEY DID. IT WAS ALL THEY KNEW TO DO. THE SOUNDS IN THE CAVE WERE MOURNFUL BUT THE PEOPLE DIDN'T KNOW IT FOR THEY HAD NEVER KNOWN JOY. THE SPIRIT IN THE CAVE WAS DEATH BUT THE PEOPLE DIDN'T KNOW IT FOR THEY HAD NEVER KNOWN LIFE.

BUT THEN ONE DAY THEY HEARD A DIFFERENT VOICE. "I HAVE HEARD YOUR CRIES," IT ANNOUNCED. "I HAVE FELT YOUR CHILL & SEEN YOUR DARKNESS. I HAVE COME TO HELP."

THE CAVE PEOPLE GREW QUIET. THEY HAD NEVER HEARD THIS VOICE. HOPE SOUNDED STRANGE TO THEIR EARS. "HOW CAN WE KNOW YOU HAVE COME TO HELP?"

"TRUST ME," HE ANSWERED. "I HAVE WHAT YOU NEED."

THE CAVE PEOPLE PEERED THROUGH THE DARKNESS AT THE FIGURE OF THE STRANGER. HE WAS STACKING SOMETHING, THEN STOOPING & STACKING MORE.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" ONE NERVOUSLY CRIED.

THE STRANGER DIDN'T ANSWER.

"WHAT ARE YOU MAKING?" ONE SHOUTED EVEN LOUDER. STILL NO RESPONSE.

"TELL US!" DEMANDED A THIRD. THE VISITOR STOOD & SPOKE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE VOICES. "I HAVE WHAT U NEED." WITH THAT HE TURNED TO THE PILE AT HIS FEET & LIT IT. WOOD IGNITED, FLAMES ERUPTED & LIGHT FILLED THE CAVERN. THE CAVE PEOPLE TURNED AWAY IN FEAR.

"PUT IT OUT!" THEY CRIED. "IT HURTS OUR EYES."

"LIGHT ALWAYS HURTS BEFORE IT HELPS," HE ANSWERED. "STEP CLOSER. THE PAIN WILL SOON PASS."

"NOT I," DECLARED A VOICE. "NOR I," AGREED A SECOND.

"ONLY A FOOL WOULD RISK EXPOSING HIS EYES TO SUCH LIGHT." THE STRANGER STOOD NEXT TO THE FIRE. "WOULD YOU PREFER THE DARKNESS? WOULD YOU PREFER THE COLD? DON'T FOLLOW YOUR FEARS. TAKE A STEP OF FAITH."

FOR A LONG TIME NO ONE SPOKE. THE PEOPLE HOVERED IN

GROUPS COVERING THEIR EYES. THE FIRE BUILDER STOOD NEXT TO THE FIRE ALL ALONE. "IT'S WARM HERE," HE INVITED.

"HE'S RIGHT," ONE FROM BEHIND HIM ANNOUNCED. "IT IS WARMER." THE STRANGER TURNED & SAW A FIGURE SLOWLY STEPPING TOWARD THE FIRE.

"I CAN OPEN MY EYES NOW," SHE PROCLAIMED. "I CAN SEE."

"COME CLOSER," INVITED THE FIRE BUILDER. SHE DID. SHE STEPPED INTO THE RING OF LIGHT.

"IT'S SO WARM!" SHE EXTENDED HER HANDS & SIGHED AS HER CHILL BEGAN TO PASS.

"COME, EVERYONE! FEEL THE WARMTH," SHE INVITED.

"SILENCE, WOMAN!" CRIED ONE OF THE CAVE DWELLERS.

"DARE YOU LEAD US INTO YOUR FOLLY? LEAVE US. LEAVE US & TAKE YOUR LIGHT WITH YOU."

SHE TURNED TO THE STRANGER. "WHY WON'T THEY COME?"

HE SAID, "THEY CHOOSE THE CHILL, FOR THOUGH IT'S COLD, IT'S ALL THEY KNOW. THEY'D RATHER BE COLD THAN CHANGE."

"AND LIVE IN THE DARK?"

"AND LIVE IN THE DARK."

THE NOW-WARM WOMAN STOOD SILENT. LOOKING FIRST AT THE DARK, THEN AT THE MAN.

"WILL YOU LEAVE THE FIRE?" HE ASKED.

SHE PAUSED, THEN ANSWERED, "I CANNOT. I CANNOT BEAR THE COLD." THEN SHE SPOKE AGAIN. "BUT NOR CAN I BEAR THE THOUGHT OF MY PEOPLE IN DARKNESS."

"YOU DON'T HAVE TO," HE RESPONDED, REACHING INTO THE FIRE & REMOVING A STICK. "CARRY THIS TO YOUR PEOPLE. TELL THEM THE LIGHT IS HERE & THE LIGHT IS WARM. TELL THEM THE LIGHT IS FOR ALL WHO DESIRE IT."

WHEN YOU MADE YOUR CONFESSION OF FAITH THAT YOU BELIEVE JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD & YOU RECEIVED HIM AS YOUR LORD & SAVIOR - **YOU STEPPED INTO THE LIGHT**. IF YOU HAVE NOT BELIEVED IN JESUS & RECEIVED HIM AS YOUR LORD & SAVIOR - **YOU ARE STILL IN THE DARKNESS**. JESUS IS THE DIVIDING LINE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL SALVATION, FOR BEING IN THE LIGHT. WHERE ARE YOU IN THAT JOURNEY? WHEN YOU WERE BAPTIZED INTO JESUS & RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE - YOU PUT ON CHRIST TO WALK & LIVE IN THE LIGHT. STEP INTO THE LIGHT! PUT ON JESUS.... WHERE ARE YOU IN THAT JOURNEY? SPARE ALL

THE DETAILS, DODGES & HEDGES, CUT TO THE CHASE, STEP INTO THE LIGHT BY BELIEVING IN JESUS. THE DETAILS & DEPTH OF YR FAITH JOURNEY WILL COME & DEVELOP WITH THE PASSING OF TIME - THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD - THE PRAYERS - THE FELLOWSHIP. YOU MUST BEGIN THE JOURNEY BY STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT.

I BEGAN THAT JOURNEY WHEN I WAS 14 - EVERY FACET OF MY LIFE - EVERY DIRECTION & DECISION HAS BEEN DIRECTED BY THE LIGHT OF JESUS. HOW ABOUT YOU? FOR ME THERE HAVE BEEN SOME DARK CORNERS HERE & THERE - NONE OF US ARE PERFECT. IT IS ABOUT BEING IN THE LIGHT & NOT ABOUT OUR DARK MISTAKES. STAY IN THE LIGHT OF JESUS & HIS LIGHT PREVAILS.

ONE MIGHT WONDER, IS IT REALLY THAT SIMPLE? YES, IT IS! STEPPING INTO TH LIGHT CHANGES OUR LIVES IN EXTRAORDINARY WAYS. IT DOES, INDEED, MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NIGHT & DAY - LIVING IN THE LIGHT OR DARKNESS. THERE ARE WAY TOO MANY EVIL & MEAN PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD WHO CONTINUE TO LIVE IN DARKNESS - THEY LEAVE DEATH & DESTRUCTION IN THEIR WAKE. IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LIGHT & DARKNESS. THOSE IN THE LIGHT ARE ALWAYS CLEANING UP THE DEBRIS & HORRID DESTRUCTION OF THOSE IN THE DARK-NESS. LIGHT DOES, INDEED, CLEANSE & PURIFY. IT BLEACHES OUT & REVEALS LIFE AS GOD INTENDS LIFE TO BE. APOSTLE JOHN WOULD HAVE US UNDERSTAND THAT THOSE WITHOUT JESUS IN THEIR LIVES DO NOT EVEN KNOW LIFE BUT ONLY DEATH - NO LIGHT ONLY DARKNESS.

GOD SHAPES REALITY - NOT THE PERCEPTIONS OF PEOPLE. WE LIKE TO SAY THAT PERCEPTION DETERMINES REALITY BUT THAT IS NOT TRUE. IT IS VERY PRIDEFUL TO SUPPOSE OUR PUNY PERCEPTION DETERMINES REALITY. GOD IS THE MAKER OF ALL CREATION - GOD SHAPES REALITY - NOT US. WE CAN BE AS PHILO-SOPHICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL ABOUT IT AS WE WANT TO BUT GOD IS LAUGHING, OFTEN TIMES CRYING, AT OUR PUNY ATTEMPTS TO THWART GOD'S WILL & PURPOSES. AS CHRISTIANS, IF WE CANNOT DO IT IN THE LIGHT OF DAY FOR ALL TO SEE THEN DO NOT DO IT - BARRING OF COURSE THE NEED FOR PRIVACY & HUMILITY.

STEPPING INTO THE LIGHT GIVES US A HEIGHTENED SENSE OF

VISION & DIRECTION SO THAT WE NOT STUMBLE & FALL OR BE DISTRACTED OR MISDIRECTED BY THE DARKNESS OF SIN. I DO NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU BUT I OFTEN TIMES THINK/FEEL THAT I SHOULD BE FURTHER ALONG IN MY FAITH JOURNEY WITH JESUS THAN I AM. THE DARKNESS & DECEPTION OF SIN/DARKNESS CAN BE SO ENTIC-ING & ALLURING. DARKNESS PROMISES SO MUCH TO ONLY GIVE DEATH & DESPAIR. IF ANY WAY, DIRECTION, CHOICE TO BE MADE WILL NOT BEAR THE LIGHT OF JESUS - STEP AWAY FROM IT & BACK INTO THE LIGHT. MY LIFE, YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN SO MUCH MORE BLESSED & DELIGHTFUL BECAUSE ALL THE CHOICES OF DARKNESS ARE TO NOT EVEN BE CONSIDERED AS AN OPTION FOR US. STEP INTO THE LIGHT & LIFE OF JESUS.