

23. THE CHOICES WE MAKE (JOHN 5:14) 08/19/12  
 FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, PASTOR LEE HENDON

IN THE MIDST OF THE EVENT OF JESUS HEALING THE PARA-LYZED MAN IS THIS EXPLETIVE FROM JESUS. I FIND IT TO BE VERY OUTSTANDING - LIKE A SORE THUMB - HIT WITH A HAMMER - OUCH - CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW? REALLY, IT IS VERY MUCH OUT OF THE ORDINARY FOR JESUS TO SAY SUCH A THING IN ITS PRESENT CON-TEXT. I CANNOT SEE A FLAG LIKE THAT WITHOUT ALLOWING IT TO TAKE ME TO TASK - GAME ON! JESUS HAVE YOUR WAY WITH ME....

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, I HAVE RIDDEN MY MOTORCYCLE TO & THRU EVERY STATE IN THE U.S.A. & EVERY PROVINCE IN CANADA. I COMPLETED IT WITH MY TRIP LAST SUMMER TO ALASKA. NO, I HAVE NOT RIDDEN TO & THRU HAWAII - YA CANNOT RIDE TO HAWAII - NOT YET.

PERHAPS YOU HEARD THE FUNNY STORY ABOUT THE MAN WHO DISCOVERED A GENIE'S BOTTLE? UPON BEING RELEASED, THE GENIE PROMISED THE MAN ANY WISH HE SO DESIRED. THE MAN SAID, "OKAY, BUILD ME A HIGHWAY TO HAWAII - I HAVE A FEAR OF FLYING & I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO GO THERE." THE GENIE HESITATED BY SAYING, "YOU MUST NOT REALIZED ALL THE CON-CRETE & REBARB REQUIRED, THE OCEAN'S DEPTH, THE THOUSANDS OF MILES INVOLVED IN SUCH A CONSTRUCTION. PLEASE MAKE ANOTHER WISH." TRYING TO BE EASY TO GET ALONG WITH THE MAN SAID, "OKAY. I HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD WOMEN. EXPLAIN WOMEN TO ME." THE GENIE PAUSED TO EXCLAIM, "OKAY, DO YOU WANT THAT HIGHWAY TWO OR FOUR LANES?" BUT THUS FAR, NO HIGHWAY TO HAWAII.....HAHA. WHEN THERE IS I WILL RIDE TO IT.

ALONG MY MANY TRAVELS I HAVE ENCOUNTERED NUMEROUS, NUMEROUS, NUMEROUS **CHOICES** ON DIRECTION.... LEFT, RIGHT OR STRAIGHT AHEAD. TWISTY HERE, TURNY THERE. AS YOU KNOW, LIFE IS A LOT LIKE THAT & OUR LIVES ARE SHAPED & DIRECTED BY **THE CHOICES WE MAKE**. I AM OFTEN SURPRISED BY SO MANY CHILDREN, YOUTH & ADULTS WHO REFUSE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR CHOICES MADE. **NO ONE IS ENTITLED TO THIS, THAT OR THE OTHER** - HELLO, MAKE YOUR CHOICES WISELY & WITH DISCERNMENT - THEN OWN THEM TO MOVE ON.

LET'S NOT BE LIKE THE BUZZARD, THE BAT & THE BUMBLEBEE:

**THE BUZZARD**

IF YOU PUT A BUZZARD IN A PEN/COOP THAT IS 6 FEET BY 8 FEET & IS ENTIRELY OPEN AT THE TOP, THE BIRD, IN SPITE OF ITS ABILITY TO FLY, WILL BE AN ABSOLUTE PRISONER. THE REASON IS THAT A BUZZARD ALWAYS BEGINS A FLIGHT FROM THE GROUND WITH A RUN OF 10 TO 12 FEET. WITHOUT SPACE TO RUN, AS IS ITS HABIT, IT WILL NOT EVEN ATTEMPT TO FLY, BUT WILL REMAIN A PRISONER FOR LIFE IN A SMALL JAIL WITH NO TOP.

**THE BAT**

THE ORDINARY BAT THAT FLIES AROUND AT NIGHT, A REMARK-ABLE NIMBLE CREATURE IN THE AIR, CANNOT TAKE OFF FROM A LEVEL PLACE. IF IT IS PLACED ON THE FLOOR OR FLAT GROUND, ALL IT CAN DO IS SHUFFLE ABOUT HELPLESSLY & UNTIL IT REACHES SOME SLIGHT ELEVATION FROM WHICH IT CAN THROW ITSELF INTO THE AIR. THEN, AT ONCE, IT TAKES OFF LIKE A FLASH.

**THE BUMBLEBEE**

A BUMBLEBEE, IF DROPPED INTO AN OPEN TUMBLER, WILL BE THERE UNTIL IT DIES, UNLESS IT IS TAKEN OUT. IT NEVER SEES THE MEANS OF ESCAPE AT THE TOP BUT PERSISTS IN TRYING TO FIND SOME WAY OUT THROUGH THE SIDES NEAR THE BOTTOM. IT WILL SEEK A WAY WHERE NONE EXISTS UNTIL IT DESTROYS ITSELF.

**PEOPLE**

IN MANY WAYS WE ARE LIKE THE BUZZARD, THE BAT, THE BUMBLEBEE. WE STRUGGLE WITH ALL OUR PROBLEMS & FRUSTRATIONS, NEVER REALIZING THAT ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS LOOK UP!

THAT'S THE ANSWER, THE ESCAPE ROUTE & THE SOLUTION TO ANY PROBLEM.....JUST LOOK UP! SORROW LOOKS BACK, WORRY LOOKS AROUND, BUT FAITH LOOKS UP! **JESUS IS OUR LOOK UP!**

ON MY LONG MOTORCYCLE TRIPS I NOW HAVE THE LUXURY OF AN IN-THE-DASH NAVIGATION SYSTEM - IT HELPS TO KEEP ME ON TRACK WHEN I FOLLOW IT CORRECTLY & WISELY. JESUS IS OUR NAVI-PROGRAMMING FOR HOW WE ARE TO LIVE OUR LIVES!

CONSIDER: ***“SIN NO MORE THAT NOTHING WORSE BEFALL YOU.”*** IN THE JEWISH MINDSET THERE WAS A VERY CLOSE CONNECTION BETWEEN SIN & SUFFERING. IF A PERSON SUFFERED IT WAS BECAUSE THEY HAD SINNED. LET OUR MINDS JOG BACK TO THE GARDEN OF EDEN - NO SIN, NO SUFFERING. ENTERED SIN,

SUFFERING BEGAN. JESUS IS CERTAINLY SHOWING/EXPOUNDING MORE THAN JEWISH SUPERSTITION & POPULAR TRUISMS.

MY MEMORY TRACES BACK TO CHILDHOOD WHEN I WAS CAUGHT WITH MY HAND IN THE COOKIE JAR. (EVER BEEN THERE YOURSELF?) MY MOTHER WOULD ASSAIL ME, "ARE YOU EATING SWEETS BEFORE DINNER?" THAT REALLY WAS NOT A QUESTION BUT I WOULD FAINT BACK WITH A "NO...." HOW OFTEN WE ARE RELUCTANT TO CLAIM RESPONSIBILITY, TO FESS UP FOR OUR OWN SIN & CERTAINLY NOT THE BELT WHIPPING THAT WAS TO FOLLOW.

JESUS' STATEMENT IS NOT EXPLANATORY FOR ALL OF LIFE BUT CERTAINLY FOR A BIG SLICE OF IT. TRULY WE ARE AWARE THAT MUCH SUFFERING OCCURS NOT FROM SIN BUT FROM ACCIDENTS & OFTEN NO BLAME OR INTENT OF OUR OWN. BUT WE ARE TO CONSIDER THAT MUCH OF OUR SUFFERING DOES RESULT FROM OUR OWN SIN AS WELL. IT WAS BY THE GRACE OF GOD THAT THRU JESUS AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME IN THE PARALYZED MAN'S LIFE THAT THE SIN CAUSING HIS PREDICAMENT HAD BEEN FOR-GIVEN & HIS WHOLENESS RESTORED. JESUS IS OFTEN TIMES THE INTERVENING GRACE THAT TURNS OUR LIVES AROUND TO PROCEED IN A MORE HEALTHY & SATISFYING DIRECTION. GOD - JESUS WANTS US TO BE HAPPY & JOYFUL IN OUR LIVES. THIS IS NOT TO BE A SHOCK TO US! BUT FINDING HEALTH & HAPPINESS IS DIFFICULT TO DO WHEN OUR LIVES ARE CAUGHT, TRAPPED, CRIPPLED BY THE QUAGMIRE, THE PARALYSIS OF SELF-PERPETU-ATING SIN. JESUS IS HERE - NOW - TO SET US FREE. TAKE UP OUR PALLETS & WALK!

IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT WE **SIN NO MORE** - JUST STOP SINNING! THAT WE LOOK UP TO DISCOVER, TO FIND JESUS AS THE WAY, THE TRUTH & THE LIFE INTENDED FOR US ALL. FOLLOWING JESUS IS VERY GOOD FOR US. OBEYING GOD'S WILL IS VERY GOOD FOR US. DO NOT FIND THIS TO BE SURPRISING. GOD IS NOT TRYING TO BE A BULLY WORKING AGAINST OUR BEST SELF-INTEREST BUT IS IN LEAGUE WITH US TO HELP US BECOME THE VERY BEST WE HAVE BEEN CREATED TO BE! NOT ONLY THAT, GOD WILL GIVE US THE WHERE-WITH-ALL TO MAKE IT HAPPEN AS WE FOLLOW GOD'S LEAD. I HAVE EXPERIENCED THAT TIME & AGAIN IN MY OWN LIFE & I AM SURE YOU HAVE AS WELL.

NOW THEN, DO YOU THINK THAT THE PARALYZED MAN, NOW MADE TO WALK AGAIN, WENT ON HIS WAY TO **NEVER** SIN AGAIN?

WILL YOU GO YOUR WAY TODAY, COMPLETELY FORGIVEN BY THE GRACE OF GOD, TO GO YOUR WAY & **NEVER** SIN AGAIN? I DON'T THINK SO - I WOULD HOPE SO FOR YOU & ME - BUT DON'T THINK SO - HAVE NOT EVER EXPERIENCED SUCH A PERFECT GPS ROUTE FOR ANY PERSON - EXCEPT FOR THAT OF JESUS CHRIST! WHICH MEANS THAT WE ARE ALWAYS AT RISK - NOT WHEN WE FOLLOW GOD - BUT WHEN WE FOLLOW THE WAYWARD & WILLFUL FOLLY OF SIN. EVEN THEN, JESUS DOES NOT EVER LEAVE US TO THE FOLLY, DESPAIR & DESTRUCTIVENESS OF OUR SIN. JESUS COMES TO US EVEN AS WE ARE BROKEN DOWN & SHATTERED BY SIN TO LIFT US UP - MAKE US WHOLE TO FIND HIM & WALK AGAIN. LOOK UP - JESUS IS THERE TO HELP US NOW & FOR ALWAYS....