

4. THE SON OF GOD (JOHN 1:24-34) 01/29/12

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, PASTOR LEE HENDON

THERE IS THIS TALL YOUNG MAN WALKING DOWN A CITY STREET MUNCHING ON A COOKIE - HEAD SHAVED SMOOTH AS A CUE BALL. HE COMES UPON A STETHOSCOPE LYING ON THE SIDEWALK. NO ONE IS AROUND TO CLAIM IT SO HE BENDS OVER TO PICK IT UP. HE PUTS THE EAR PIECES IN HIS EARS TO PLACE THE MIC ON HIS COOKIE. MUCH TO HIS SURPRISE HE HEARS THE SONG, "SUGAR, SUGAR, HONEY, HONEY." AS YOU MIGHT SUPPOSE THIS STARTLES THE MAN BUT NOW HE IS EVEN MORE CURIOUS ABOUT THE STETHOSCOPE.

LEANING UP AGAINST A STREET LIGHT HE PLACES THE STETHOSCOPE ON THE POST TO HEAR THE SONG, "LEAN ON ME, WHEN YOU'RE NOT STRONG."

NEARBY IS A FIRE HYDRANT - "WHO, WHO, WHO LET THE DOGS OUT, WHO, WHO???"

THE PEDESTRIAN CROSSWALK LIGHT - "STOP IN THE NAME OF LOVE..."

SOME ROCKS COVERING THE GROUND - "I AM A ROCK, I AM AN ISLAND..."

LITTLE PUPPY DOG - "BAD, BAD TO THE BONE..."

THEN HE PAUSED TO PUT THE STETHOSCOPE ON HIS HEART & HEARD THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS LOUD & CLEAR - "CHRIST LIVES IN ME!"

PLACING THE STETHOSCOPE ON JOHN THE BAPTIST'S HEART ONE WOULD HEAR, "BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD! THIS IS THE SON OF GOD!" HOW DOES YOUR HEART BEAT?

THE APOSTLE JOHN WANTS TO BE CLEAR & CERTAIN FROM THE GET GO OF HIS GOSPEL THAT WE KNOW JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD! THE HEART BEAT OF HIS GOSPEL THUMPS LOUD & CLEAR ABOUT WHO JESUS IS! GOD'S SON!

JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS CLEAR ABOUT THE HEART BEAT OF GOD - JESUS IS GOD'S SON & HE WAS NOT! JOHN UNDERSTOOD & DECLARED THAT TO THE RELIGIOUS FUDDY-DUDDIES WHO CAME OUT TO CHALLENGE HIM. RELIGION WAS THEIR GAME NOT JOHN'S - THEY WERE THE PROFESSIONALS - THEY LOOKED THE PART - JOHN DID NOT. THE INQUISITION HAD THE FULL BACKING OF THE PRIESTS, LEVITES & PHARISEES TO PRESS JOHN INTO SUBMISSION.

JOHN ADMITTED HE WAS NOT THE CHRIST, NOR ELIJAH OR THE PROPHET WHO WAS TO COME. HE WAS BUT A MAN IN THE WILDERNESS PROCLAIMING THE MESSAGE OF GOD. THEY MEANT TO STOP HIM WITH, "THEN WHY ARE YOU BAPTIZING?" YOU ARE NOT A RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONAL WITH STATUS & STANDING - IMPLICATION BEING, "STOP IT!" JOHN WAS A HUGE SUCCESS - MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE - THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WERE NOT MAKING ANY DIFFERENCE AT ALL! BORING THE PEOPLE TO TEARS, THEY WERE....

JOHN THE BAPTIST POINTED TO JESUS, NOT TO HIMSELF. HE WAS BUT THE MESSENGER, JESUS WAS THE MESSAGE! WHAT A TREMENDOUS RELIEF THAT IS - WE ARE BUT THE MESSENGERS - NOT THE MESSAGE. MANY A CHRISTIAN IS EATEN UP WITH A CHRIST COMPLEX - THINKING THEMSELVES TO BE CHRIST (SO GODLY.) I NEVER DID LEARN HOW TO WALK ON WATER - MISSED THAT CLASS - YOU? WE ARE TO POINT TO, TO PROCLAIM JESUS AS GOD'S SON. DO NOT LOOK TO ME, LOOK TO JESUS. WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY REVEALING JESUS AS GOD'S SON.

JOHN SAID, "I AM NOT EVEN WORTHY TO UNTIE HIS SANDALS." THAT WAS THE MOST MENIAL OF ALL SLAVE CHORES - TO BEND & REMOVE SOMEONE'S DUSTY, DIRTY, STINKY SANDALS WAS A TASK NO ONE WANTED TO DO. JESUS IS SO ABOVE US JOHN/WE CANNOT EVEN DO THAT. WE MUST KNOW OUR PLACE IN THE GOSPEL MESSAGE TO ELEVATE JESUS AS THE MESSAGE ABOVE ALL. IN COMPARISON, WE ARE SO INSIGNIFICANT - LET US NOT GET PUFFED UP & PROUD IN OUR WORK FOR THE LORD. IT IS ALL ABOUT JESUS - NEVER ABOUT OURSELVES & GETTING OUR WAY - WHAT CAN WE, WHAT MUST WE DO FOR JESUS..... FORGETTING OURSELVES.... THAT JESUS MAY BE CLEARLY LIFTED UP & SEEN!

SURE WE MUST DO THAT WHICH WE CAN, "I BAPTIZE WITH WATER," JOHN SAID. "JESUS BAPTIZES WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT." TRUTH BE KNOWN, WHEN WE DO ANYTHING AS CHRISTIANS WE MUST LIFT UP JESUS TO COMPLETE THAT WHICH WE ARE DOING. WE CAN ONLY BAPTIZE WITH WATER - ONLY JESUS CAN BAPTIZE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT!!! IN THE BAPTISTERY THERE MUST BE ROOM FOR THREE - THE MINISTER, THE BAPTISMAL CANDIDATE & JESUS. WE COVER WITH THE WATER, JESUS FILLS WITH THE SPIRIT. SUCH IS SURE & CERTAIN WITH ALL THAT WE DO AS CHURCH. WE MUST BE POINTING TO JESUS TO LET JESUS BE OUT AHEAD.

I WONDER IF WE REALLY EMBRACE, POINT TO, PROCLAIM THE POWER OF THE ACCUSATION - PROCLAMATION - JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD - JESUS IS GOD'S SON. LET THAT SINK IN JUST A MOMENT. JESUS IS NOT JUST A PROPHET, A RABBI, A GOOD & GODLY MAN. JESUS IS GOD'S SON & WE ARE TO TAKE NOTICE! WE ARE TO FASTEN OUR SEAT BELTS FOR THE RIDE OF A LIFETIME AS JESUS TAKES THE WHEEL & STEPS ON THE GAS - HOLD ON!!! VAROOM!!!

DAN KIMBALL WROTE IN HIS BOOK, THEY LIKE JESUS BUT NOT THE CHURCH, "JESUS IS EVERYWHERE. I RECENTLY WALKED INTO A GAS STATION TO PAY FOR SOME GAS AND SAW SOME JESUS BOBBLE-HEADS FOR SALE ON A SHELF. I WAS KIND OF SURPRISED TO SEE JESUS IN THE GAS STATION, BUT THERE HE WAS, THREE OR FOUR OF HIM STANDING IN A ROW. AS I WAITED TO PAY FOR THE GAS THE JESUS BOBBLE-HEADS SILENTLY STARED BACK AT ME, ALL POLITELY SMILING AND NODDING IN UNISON.

"NOT TOO LONG AFTERWARD, I VISITED A MAJOR CLOTHING STORE. NEAR THE ENTRY WAS A DISPLAY FOR JESUS ACTION FIGURES. PROBABLY A DOZEN OR MORE JESUSES HUNG IN NICE PLASTIC PACKAGES. WHILE I STOOD THERE LOOKING AT THEM, A WOMAN IN HER EARLY TWENTIES GRABBED ONE FROM THE RACK. SHE ENTHUSIASTICALLY SAID TO HER COMPANION, 'I LOVE THESE!' OFF SHE RAN TO THE CASH REGISTER W/ JESUS UNDER HER ARM."

FOR JOHN THE BAPTIST, JESUS WAS BRAND NEW ON THE SALVATION SCENE - YET TO BE DISCOVERED & DISCLOSED FOR ALL THE WORLD TO SEE. JOHN TOOK NOTICE & PROCLAIMED THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH. THE HOPE OF SALVATION HAS COME! JESUS TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE? HAVE WE SO OVER MARKETED & TRIVIALIZED JESUS THAT HIS POWER, HIS AUTHORITY AS GOD'S SON HAS MELTED INTO THE OBLIVION OF POP CULTURE & MASS MARKETING? I SOMETIMES EVEN THINK CHURCHES & CHRISTIANS TAKE JESUS FOR GRANTED. WE MUST ONCE AGAIN BE ENERGIZED, CAPTURED, ENTHRALLED BY JESUS. THERE IS SO MUCH ABOUT HIM THAT SHOULD FASCINATE & COMMAND OUR ATTENTION - TO REDIRECT & CHALLENGE OUR LIVES!

WHO DO YOU SAY JESUS IS? IS GOD'S SON A MEANINGFUL & CENTRAL PART OF WHO YOU ARE? FOR THAT TO HAPPEN WE MUST RELEARN OR FIRST LEARN ABOUT HIM. THAT IS THE JOURNEY THE GOSPEL OF JOHN WILL ROCK US WITH - BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, THIS IS GOD'S SON!

LEE STROBEL INTERVIEWED CHARLES TEMPLETON AT AGE 83. TEMPLETON WAS FORMERLY WITH BILLY GRAHAM CRUSADES & WAS NOW AN AVOWED ATHEIST. STROBEL ASK TEMPLETON WHAT HE THOUGHT OF JESUS? "IN MY VIEW," HE DECLARED, "HE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT HUMAN BEING WHO EVER EXISTED. AND IF I MAY PUT IT THIS WAY, I...MISS...HIM!" TEARS FLOODED HIS EYES. HOW INCREDIBLY SAD. CHARLES TEMPLETON HAD REJECTED CHRISTIANITY, THE CHURCH, HIS FAITH & HIS FORMER VOCATION OF PREACHING & EVANGELISM. AT THE END OF HIS LIFE, WHEN ASKED ABOUT JESUS, HE BROKE DOWN & WEPT, SAYING HOW MUCH HE MISSED JESUS.

THERE IS SOMETHING SO VERY POWERFUL ABOUT JESUS THAT TRANSCENDS CHURCH & TRADITION THAT NEEDS TO, MUST CAPTURE & DOMINATE OUR LIVES! BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, THIS IS GOD'S SON!