

OUR NORTH POLE – THE JESUS WAY!

PFENTECOST 18 OCTOBER 4, 2009 GENESIS 2:18-24 PSALM

HEBREWS !;1-4; 2:5-12 MARK 10:2-16

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST, GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.

WHEN IT WAS JEFF’S WEEK TO PREACH LAST WEEK, I WAS REFLECTING ON OUR TIME OVER THE SUMMER AND HOW MUCH ATTENTION AND TIME I HAD BEEN GIVING TO DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION, THE DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE AND HOW IS IT THAT THE WORD OF GOD IS OUR AUTHORITY FOR FAITH AND LIFE. SO I DECIDED LAST WEEK THAT THE NEXT TIME I PREACH, I’M NOT GOING TO TOUCH ON ANY OF THOSE SUBJECTS. AND TODAY IS THAT NEXT TIME. THEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS WEEK I STARTED PREPARING FOR THIS MORNING AND I READ THE SCRIPTURES - AND....WELL YOU HEARD THEM. I THOUGHT MAYBE I COULD AVOID THE ISSUE IF THE 2ND LESSON FROM HEBREWS GAVE ME A DIFFERENT THEME. I TOOK A CLOSE LOOK AND THE BOOK OF HEBREWS STARTS OUT BY TELLING US THAT JESUS WHO SPEAKS THAT GOSPEL WORD TODAY IS GOD’S SPOKESMAN, THAT THIS JESUS WAS THERE AT THE CREATION EVENT WHERE GOD SETS THE ORDER FOR MARRIAGE AS BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN. HEBREWS TELLS US THAT JESUS IS THE REFLECTION OF GOD’S GLORY, **THE EXACT IMPRINT OF GOD’S VERY BEING**, WHO SUSTAINS ALL THINGS BY HIS POWERFUL WORD, WHO DIES FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD.

WELL, SO WHAT AM I TO DO? I DECIDED THAT FOR THE TIME BEING I'M GOING TO LEAVE THESE SCRIPTURE WORDS WITH YOU TO SPEAK TO YOU WITHOUT MY HELP. BESIDES, I HEARD A BIBLE SCHOLAR SAY IN A CONFERENCE THIS LAST SUMMER THAT 90% OF THE WORDS OF JESUS IN THE SCRIPTURES CAN BE UNDERSTOOD BY A 10 YEAR OLD CHILD AND WE SHOULDN'T MAKE ALL OF THIS SO COMPLICATED.

SO I DECIDED TO CHANGE THE PACE OF THINGS A LITTLE AND TELL YOU A STORY THIS MORNING ABOUT WINNIE THE POOH. (GOT THE IDEA FROM EUGENE PETERSON) THE STORY BEGINS WITH CHRISTOPHER ROBIN CALLING FOR AN EXPEDITION TO FIND THE NORTH POLE. POOH AND A BUNCH OF HIS FRIENDS, KANGA, AND ROO, AND PIGLET, AND EYORE AND OTHERS JOIN IN THE EXPEDITION. ALONG THE WAY ROO GETS INTO A POOL OF WATER THAT HAS CASCADING WATERFALLS. AND EVERYBODY BECOMES CONCERNED AS ROO IS WASHED FROM ONE POOL TO THE OTHER WITH THESE LITTLE CASCADING WATERFALLS IN BETWEEN. ONE OF THE ANIMALS STICKS HIS TAIL INTO THE POOL HOPING ROO CAN GRAB IT AS HE GOES BY, BUT THAT DOESN'T WORK. WINNIE THE POO RAN UP AHEAD TO GET TO ONE OF THE LOWER POOLS THAT ROO WOULD EVENTUALLY COME TO AND HE PICKED UP THIS POLE THAT HE WOULD STICK OUT INTO ROO'S PATH WHEN HE CAME TO THAT PARTICULAR POOL. AND SURE ENOUGH, WHEN ROO WENT BY, HE WAS ABLE TO CATCH HIMSELF ON THE POLE AND HE WAS SAVED. EVERY BODY WAS CHEERING AND HAPPY THAT LITTLE ROO WAS NOW SAFE.

AFTER A TIME, CHRISTOPHER ROBIN, ASKED POOH WHERE HE HAD FOUND THAT POLE. POOH SAID HE HAD JUST FOUND IT ON THE GROUND AND THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GOOD TO TRY AND SAVE ROO'S LIFE WITH. CHRISTOPHER ROBIN TOOK THE POLE AND STUCK IT IN THE GROUND AND SAID, "POOH HAS FOUND THE NORTH POLE." HE TIED A SIGN ON THE POLE, THAT SAID, "THE NORTH POLE – DISCOVERED BY POOH. POOH FOUND IT." THE EXPEDITION IS OVER. AND THEY ALL WENT HOME.

WE LIVE IN A TIME AND PLACE WHERE FROM TALK SHOW HOSTS, TO SELF HELP BOOKS, TO POLITICIANS THE CLAIM IS MADE THAT THE NORTH POLE HAS BEEN FOUND. AND PEOPLE, DESPERATE FOR SOME HELP, TAKE THE BAIT AND ARE HOOKED THAT WHATEVER IS CURRENTLY CLAIMED TO BE THE NORTH POLE MUST BE TRUE. THEY GO WITH THAT FOR A WHILE UNTIL IT PROVES TO BE DECEITFUL AND NOT ABLE TO KEEP ALL IT PROMISES. THEN THERE IS ANOTHER EXPEDITION LAUNCHED TO FIND THE REAL NORTH POLE. EAST POLES AND WEST POLES ARE ALSO OPTIONS. BUT SOONER OR LATER THE EXPEDITIONS END UP AT DEAD ENDS AND ITS NOT SO LAUGHABLE. I WANT TO LOVE ALL THE WINNIE THE POOHS, THE CHRISTOPHER ROBINS, THE ROOS, THE EYORS. THE PIGLETS. I WANT TO HONOR THEIR LIVES AND CARE FOR THEM. BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS I WANT TO SHOW THEM THE TRUE NORTH POLE. I WANT TO LEAD THEM TO JESUS WHO WE CHRISTIANS BELIEVE IS THE TRUE NORTH POLE. AE THERE ANY CHRISTIANS HERE THIS MORNING WHO DON'T BELIEVE JESUS IS THE TRUE NORTH POLE.

JESUS' WAY IS NOT THE ONLY THE WAY TO LIVE. THERE ARE OTHER WAYS. MORE PEOPLE FOLLOW OTHER WAYS THAN THE JESUS WAY. BUT THERE ARE FALSE SIGNPOSTS. SEDUCTIVE DETOURS. MISDIRECTION. TEMPTATIONS LEADING AWAY FROM THE NARROW WAY OF JESUS' WAY.

WE LIVE IN A WINNIE THE POOH CULTURE. A CULTURE THAT IS EITHER INDIFFERENT OR IGNORANT OF THE JESUS WAY. A CULTURE DISTRACTED AND DIRECTIONLESS. BUT ALSO HUNGRY FOR MEANING. SPIRIT THIRSTY. GOD CURIOUS. SO THERE ARE EXPEDITIONS GALORE. IN JESUS, GOD BECAME LIKE ONE OF US TO SHOW US THE NORTH POLE. NOT IN AN IDEA, OR A PRINCIPLE, OR A PHILOSOPHY, BUT IN A PERSON. A PERSON WHO LONGS TO LIVE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH ONE OF US. A PERSON WHO BRINGS GOD'S MOST PRECIOUS WORD TO US, LIKE WE HAVE IN THE GOSPEL LESSON TODAY. WHERE THE ORDER OF OUR LIFE TOGETHER IS GIVEN WHEN IT COMES TO MARRIAGE AND THE STATUS OF CHILDREN AMONG US, WITH EVEN A WORD OF GRACE AND FORGIVENESS EMBEDDED THERE BECAUSE OF OUR HARDNESS OF HEART.

IT DISTRESSES ME TO NO END THAT THERE IS THIS IDEA NOW FLOATING ALL AROUND THAT GOD IN JESUS DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE DIFFERENT CHALLENGES THAT FACE US TODAY AND SO COULDN'T SPEAK TO THEM. REMEMBER WHAT THE WRITER OF HEBREWS SAYS ABOUT THIS JESUS: "THIS JESUS IS **GOD'S HEIR TO ALL THINGS**, THROUGH WHOM HE **ALSO CREATED THE WORLDS**, HE IS **THE REFLECTION OF GOD'S GLORY**

AND THE EXACT IMPRINT OF GOD'S VERY BEING, HE SUSTAINS ALL THINGS BY HIS POWERFUL WORD, AND BECAUSE OF OUR HARDNESS OF HEART, HE GIVES HIS LIFE FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD.

THIS IS JESUS, MY FRIENDS, THE WAY, THE NORTH POLE. REMEMBER HOW THE APOSTLE JOHN BEGINS HIS GOSPEL WITH "IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD. HE WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. ALL THINGS WERE MADE THROUGH HIM AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANYTHING MADE THAT WAS MADE. IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN. THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS AND THE DARKNESS HAS NOT OVERCOME IT. ... AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED THAT JESUS HAD A LIFE BEFORE HE FOUND HIMSELF IN MARY'S WOMB? A LIFE BEFORE BETHLEHEM. THAT HE WAS BACK THERE AT THE CREATION - A PART OF IT ALL. THAT WHEN GOD SAID, "LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR OWN IMAGE, JESUS WAS ONE OF THE "US." JUST THINK ABOUT THAT NOW. I THINK IT IS DANGEROUSLY THIN ICE TO WALK ON TO SAY THAT JESUS' WORDS AREN'T RELEVANT TO US TODAY BECAUSE HE WASN'T AWARE OF THE CHALLENGES THAT WOULD FACE US.

IN YOUR BULLETIN THIS MORNING THERE IS A RED SHEET INVITING YOU TO THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LUTHERAN CHRISTIAN. IT IS A HOMEWORK PIECE FOR YOU TO WORK ON DURING THIS MONTH OF

OCTOBER WHICH AT MONTH'S END WE ARE GOING TO CELEBRATE THE REFORMATION. LET ME GIVE YOU ONE OF THE ANSWERS THIS MORNING BUT YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT FOR A MINUTE AND LISTEN CLOSELY, BEFORE YOU WRITE ANYTHING DOWN.

THIS IS A WORD OF MARTIN LUTHER'S FROM HIS SERMON IN 1531

WHEN THE REFORMATION WAS IN FULL MOTION, 14 YEARS AFTER HE HAD NAILED THE 95 THESES TO THE WITTENBURG CHURCH DOOR.

“THIS IS SO GREAT A GOOD THAT NO HUMAN HEART CAN GRASP IT (THEREFORE IT NECESSITATES SUCH A GREAT AND HARD FIGHT). IT MUST NOT BE TREATED LIGHTLY, AS THE WORLD MAINTAINS AND MANY PEOPLE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND, SAYING WE SHOULD NOT FIGHT SO HARD ABOUT AN ARTICLE AND THUS TRAMPLE ON CHRISTIAN LOVE; RATHER, ALTHOUGH WE ERR ON ONE SMALL POINT, IF WE AGREE ON EVERYTHING ELSE, WE SHOULD GIVE IN AND OVERLOOK THE DIFFERENCE IN ORDER TO PRESERVE BROTHERLY AND CHRISTIAN UNITY AND FELLOWSHIP.

NO, MY DEAR MAN, DO NOT RECOMMEND TO ME PEACE AND UNITY WHEN THEREBY GOD'S WORD IS LOST, FOR THEN ETERNAL LIFE AND EVERYTHING ELSE WOULD BE LOST. IN THIS MATTER THERE CAN BE NO YIELDING NOR GIVING WAY, NO, NOT FOR LOVE OF YOU OR ANY OTHER PERSON, BUT EVERYTHING MUST YIELD TO THE WORD, WHETHER IT BE FRIEND OR FOE. THE WORD WAS GIVEN UNTO US FOR ETERNAL LIFE AND NOT TO FURTHER OUTWARD PEACE AND

UNITY. THE WORD AND DOCTRINE WILL CREATE CHRISTIAN UNITY OR FELLOWSHIP. WHERE THEY REIGN ALL ELSE WILL FOLLOW. WHERE THEY ARE NOT NO CONCORD WILL EVER ABIDE. THEREFORE DO NOT TALK TO ME ABOUT LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP, IF THAT MEANS BREAKING WITH THE WORD, OR THE FAITH, FOR THE GOSPEL DOES NOT SAY LOVE BRINGS ETERNAL LIFE, GOD'S GRACE, AND ALL HEAVENLY TREASURES, BUT THE WORD."

SO WE HAVE THIS WORD OF GOD IN JESUS, THIS PERSON, WHO WITHOUT HIS WORD, WE WOULD NOT KNOW FORGIVENESS FOR OUR HARDNESS OF HEART, WHO WITHOUT HIS WORD WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE WITH CONFIDENCE TO SAY AT EASTER, "THE LORD IS RISEN. HE IS RISEN INDEED." WHO WITHOUT HIS WORD, YOUR HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE WOULD BE NO MORE THAN A DREAM. WHO WITHOUT HIS WORD, IT WOULD BE A HOPELESS, MEANINGLESS ACT TO COME TO THIS ALTAR RAIL THIS MORNING AGAIN TO DIP A WAFER INTO SOME WINE. BUT YOU HEAR HIS WORD DON'T YOU? "THIS IS MY BODY GIVEN FOR YOU." "THIS IS MY BLOOD SHED FOR YOU." WITHOUT YOUR HEARING AND BELIEVING THESE WORDS THIS IS NOTHING BY EMPTY RITUAL. ONLY WISHFUL THINKING. PIE IN THE SKY.

HE IS THE NORTH POLE MY FRIENDS. AND HE PLANTS THE POLE OF HIS CROSS OUT IN THE OPEN, WITHIN THE SIGHT AND REACH OF US ALL. WHERE THE GROUND IS LEVEL, SO ALL KNOW THEY ARE WELCOME TO COME. AMEN.