

FOLLOW THE LEADER!

OCTOBER 18, 2009

PENTECOST 20

ISAIAH 53:4-12

PSALM 91:9-16

HEBREWS 5:1-10

MARK 10:35-45

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

I WAS TOLD MANY YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS PASTOR OF A MISSION CHURCH IN THE NORTH IDAHO TOWN OF CLARK FORK THAT THERE ARE TWO QUESTIONS PEOPLE CONSIDER WHEN LOOKING AT WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE GOING TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH A CHURCH. THE FIRST QUESTION IS “WHAT AM I GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS?” AND THE SECOND QUESTION: “HOW MUCH IS IT GOING TO COST ME.” “WHAT AM I GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS?” “HOW MUCH IS IT GOING TO COST ME.?”

THOSE TWO QUESTIONS MUST HAVE BEEN ON THE MIND OF JAMES AND JOHN WHEN THEY CAME TO JESUS WITH THE PRAYER REQUEST WE ALL HAVE HAD BUT AREN'T TOO PROUD TO CONFESS TO: **“TEACHER, WE WANT YOU TO DO FOR US WHATEVER WE ASK OF YOU.”** JESUS GOES ALONG WITH THIS FOOLISHNESS BY ASKING THEM, “SO WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?” THEY WERE QUICK TO TELL HIM WHAT THEY WANTED “GRANT US TO SIT, ONE AT YOUR RIGHT HAND AND ONE AT YOUR LEFT, IN YOUR GLORY.” THEY WANTED POWER, PRESTIGE, PRIVILEGE, HONOR AND THE ABILITY TO LORD IT OVER OTHERS. TIMING IS EVERYTHING RIGHT? THE EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM. AND THERE

WERE ONLY TWO SPOTS. SO THEY WANTED TO BEAT EVERYBODY ELSE TO THE PUNCH. IT REALLY TICKED OFF THE OTHER TEN DISCIPLES. MAYBE BECAUSE THEY WERE THINKING THE SAME THING AND DIDN'T GET THE FIRST SHOT AT IT. MAYBE BECAUSE THEY WERE TRULY NOW WONDERING WHAT IT WOULD MEAN THAT JESUS WOULD BE GIVING UP HIS LIFE AND THEY WERE CONFUSED, AND PERPLEXED. JESUS THREW THE REAL SHOW STOPPER INTO THEIR MIDST AND MINDS THOUGH WHEN HE SAID, "YOU WANT TO BE GREAT – YOU MUST BECOME A SERVANT." "YOU WANT TO BE FIRST – YOU MUST BE A SLAVE OF ALL." "CONSIDER ME. FOR I CAME NOT TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE MY LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY." FOLLOW ME. NOW THAT WOULD QUIET A CROWD WOULDN'T IT? OR MAYBE CAUSE A RIOT AND REBELLION. IT CERTAINLY TURNS A LOT OF THINGS UPSIDE DOWN.

I HAVE BEEN THANKFUL OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL HAS TAKEN UP THE THEME OF SERVANTHOOD FOR THIS YEARS SUNDAY SCHOOL. SERVING OTHERS, LIKE JESUS SHOWED THE WAY. THIS GROWS OUT OF COMING TO REALIZE WHAT THEY ARE GETTING OUT OF BEING ASSOCIATED WITH THIS FAITH COMMUNITY. WHAT THEY AND YOU ARE GETTING IS THE RANSOM FOR ONE'S SOUL PAID.

CONSIDER YOUR BROKENNESS THIS MORNING. YOUR SHORTCOMINGS. YOUR SINS THAT YOU STRUGGLE WITH DAY IN AND DAY OUT AND THAT SEEM TO KEEP GETTING THE BEST OF YOU. THE THINGS THAT SEEM TO HOLD YOU IN ITS GRIP AND NOT LET YOU GO.

THOSE THINGS YOU LIFT IN CONFESSION AT THE BEGINNING OF WORSHIP WEEK AFTER WEEK. IF YOU CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING, I COMMEND TO YOU A READING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THEIR MEANINGS FROM YOUR SMALL CATECHISM.

AND THEN LISTEN TO HOW YOUR RANSOM IS EFFECTED - HOW IT IS PAID: FROM ISAIAH 53: (WRITTEN HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE THE FIRST GOOD FRIDAY) SURELY JESUS HAS BORNE OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED OUR DISEASES; YET WE ACCOUNTED JESUS STRICKEN, STRUCK DOWN BY GOD, AND AFFLICTED. BUT JESUS WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, CRUSHED FOR OUR INIQUITIES, UPON JESUS WAS THE PUNISHMENT THAT MADE US WHOLE, AND BY JESUS' BRUISES WE ARE HEALED. ALL WE LIKE SHEEP HAVE GONE ASTRAY; WE HAVE ALL TURNED TO OUR OWN WAY, AND THE LORD HAS LAID ON JESUS THE INIQUITY OF US ALL. JESUS WAS OPPRESSED, AND JESUS WAS AFFLICTED, YET JESUS DID NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH; LIKE A LAMB THAT IS LED TO THE SLAUGHTER, AND LIKE A SHEEP THAT BEFORE ITS SHEARERS IS SILENT, JESUS DID NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. BY A PERVISION OF JUSTICE JESUS WAS TAKEN AWAY. WHO COULD HAVE IMAGINED HIS FUTURE? FOR JESUS WAS CUT OFF FROM THE LAND OF THE LIVING, STRICKEN FOR THE TRANSGRESSION OF MY PEOPLE. THEY MADE JESUS' GRAVE WITH THE WICKED AND HIS TOMB WITH THE RICH, ALTHOUGH JESUS HAD DONE NO VIOLENCE, AND THERE WAS NO DECEIT IN JESUS' MOUTH.....THEREFORE I WILL ALLOT JESUS A PORTION WITH THE GREAT, AND HE SHALL DIVIDE

THE SPOIL WITH THE STRONG; BECAUSE JESUS Poured OUT HIMSELF TO DEATH, AND WAS NUMBERED WITH THE TRANSGRESSORS; YET JESUS BORE THE SIN OF MANY, AND MADE INTERCESSION FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS. **THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR BEING ASSOCIATED WITH THIS COMMUNITY OF FAITH, OR ANY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH FOR THAT MATTER.**

AND SO WHAT DOES IT COST YOU? WELL ON THE ONE HAND ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, AND ON THE OTHER HAND ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING. THERE IS THIS CALL TO SERVANT HOOD. AND SO HOW DO WE GO ABOUT THAT? HOW DO WE KNOW HOW TO SERVE? DO WE BECOME A DOORMAT FOR EVERYONE THAT COMES ALONG? A MAN CAME NEEDING HELP AND HE DICTATED HOW THE CHURCH NEEDED TO HELP HIM. YOU HAVE TO DO THIS. YOU HAVE TO DO THAT. AFTER ALL, YOU ARE A PASTOR AND THIS IS A CHURCH. **NOTICE, JESUS DID NOT SERVE JAMES AND JOHN IN THE WAY THEY REQUESTED, BUT IN A WAY THAT THEY NEEDED.** THE ONE SERVED DOES NOT GET TO SET THE CONDITIONS OF HOW THEY WILL BE SERVED. WE NEED TO TAKE OUR CUES FROM OUR LORD JESUS. SERVANTHOOD DOES NOT MEAN BECOMING A DOORMAT AT THE INTERSECTION OF EVERYBODY'S LIVES.

I SPENT THIS LAST WEEK ELK HUNTING WITH MY BOYS IN COLORADO. AFTER HIKING ON FOOT TO ELEVATIONS OF AROUND 10,000 FEET FOR THREE OF THOSE DAYS, I GAINED A NEW APPRECIATION FOR MY HORSE. BUT BEING IN UNFAMILAR TERRITORY, WITH CLOUDLY DAYS,

STRONG WINDS, SOME RAIN AND SOME SNOW, LOTS OF TREES, IT WAS EASY TO GET TURNED AROUND AND LOST. SO I HAD THIS LITTLE INSTRUMENT WITH ME. IT IS CALLED A GPS. A GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM. THE WAY IT WORKS IS THAT THERE ARE 24 SATELITES CONTINUOUSLY CIRCLING THE EARTH ABOUT 12,000 MILES UP TRAVELING AT ABOUT 7,000 MILES AN HOUR. BEFORE I LEFT THE HUNTING CAMP OR WHERE THE TRUCK WAS PARKED I WOULD MARK THAT SPOT ON MY GPS. THEN I WOULD START WANDERING THE WOODS UP AND DOWN, TO THE LEFT, TO THE RIGHT FOR SEVERAL HOURS. WHEN IT CAME TIME TO HEAD BACK TO WHERE I STARTED, I WOULD TURN ON MY GPS AND ASK IT TO POINT IN THE DIRECTION OF WHERE I STARTED. SO A SIGNAL SHOT 12,000 MILES UP IN THE AIR, AND THEN DOWN 12,000 MILES TO THAT STARTING POINT THAT I HAD MARKED. THEN 12,000 MILES BACK UP AND BACK DOWN WITH THE MESSAGE. IN A MOMENT OF TIME, MY GPS POINTED THE DIRECTION I NEEDED TO WALK, THE DISTANCE IT WAS, AND ON THE BASIS OF HOW FAST I HAD BEEN WALKING TO THAT POINT, GAVE ME AN ESTIMATE OF HOW LONG IT WAS GOING TO TAKE ME TO GET TO THE TRUCK OR CAMP. SIMPLY AMAZING. OUT OF THIS WORLD, LITERALLY. IT HAS TAKEN ME SOME TIME TO TRUST THIS GADGET, BECAUSE SOMETIMES I WONDERED IF IT WAS REALLY TELLING ME THE TRUTH. SOMETIMES IT FELT IN MY INSIDES LIKE I WAS WALKING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION. MY INSTINCTS SOMETIMES TOLD ME THAT I SHOULD BE GOING THAT DIRECTION WHEN MY GPS WAS TELLING ME TO GO THAT

DIRECTION. I SINCERELY THOUGHT THE GPS WAS WRONG. PEOPLE CAN BE SINCERELY WRONG YOU KNOW. SUICIDE BOMBERS ARE SINCERELY WRONG. THE POPE IN LUTHER'S DAY WAS SINCERELY WRONG. WHEN JESUS WAS CHALLENGED BY THE PHARISEES, THEY WERE SO SURE AND SINCERE THAT THEY WERE RIGHT AND JESUS WAS WRONG. IT IS HARD TO PUT YOUR TRUST IN SOMETHING ELSE THAT IS OUTSIDE OF YOU. BUT YOU KNOW, THIS GPS HAS NEVER FAILED ME. EVERYTIME I WALKED OUT OF THE WOODS AND SAW THE CAMP OR THE TRUCK I WAS AMAZED. WOW, IT SAVED ME FROM GETTING LOST ONCE AGAIN.

ONE OF MY BIGGEST CHALLENGES THOUGH HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO REMEMBER TO USE IT FROM THE BEGINNING. MANY TIMES I HAVE BEEN OUT IN THE WOODS READY TO START BACK AND REALIZED THAT I NEVER ENTERED THE STARTING POINT. DURING THOSE TIMES I WAS ON MY OWN.

GOD HAS GIVEN US A GPS SYSTEM AS WELL. WE MIGHT CALL IT GOD'S POSITIONING SYSTEM. IT IS HIS WORD THAT COMES TO US BY INSPIRATION THROUGH HIS HOLY SPIRIT MOST CLEARLY SPOKEN IN THAT WORD BECOME FLESH, JESUS. THIS GPS SYSTEM SETS THE COURSE FOR OUR BEING SERVANTS. IT SHAPES OUR INSTINCTS. IT SETS THE COMPASS OF OUR CONSCIENCE. IT GIVES US OUR MARCHING ORDERS. WE ARE NOT MASTERS OF THIS WORD BUT SERVANTS OF THIS WORD. WE DON'T SHAPE IT TO FIT OUR AGENDAS, BUT IT SHAPES OURS. THE CHURCH DOESN'T DECIDE WHAT IS WORD OF GOD AND WHAT IS NOT. THE WORD CALLS

THE CHURCH INTO BEING. SERVANTS DON'T MARCH TO THE BEAT OF THEIR OWN DRUM BUT TO THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUMMER.

SO AS WE GO FORWARD AS RANSOMED SERVANTS, WE SEE JESUS CALL US TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD – TO MAKE DISCIPLES -AND LET OTHERS KNOW OF THIS RANSOMING WORK. SO WE INVEST LOTS OF TIME IN A CANTATA THAT PROCLAIMS THE JESUS STORY ONCE AGAIN THIS YEAR BECAUSE IT IS ONE OF THE MAIN EVENTS OF OUR YEAR WHEN WE HAVE THE MOST VISITORS – THE MOST NON-LUTHERANS - COME THROUGH OUR DOORS. AND THEN AS WE SEE JESUS WITH A HEART FOR THE POOR AND HUNGRY, WE TAKE UP OFFERINGS DURING THOSE PRESENTATIONS FOR THE SOUP KITCHEN AND FOOD BANK IN WHICH LAST YEAR WE RAISED \$8,000 TO \$9,000. AND THEN THERE ARE THE YEARLY MISSION TRIPS, THIS LAST SUMMER INCLUDING 22 OF OUR YOUTH AND 5 ADULTS, WHERE PEOPLE ARE SERVED OUT OF THEIR NEED AND OUR LORD'S CALL TO US. WE SEE JESUS CARING FOR THE SICK AND THE DOWN AND OUT, AND WE SERVE BY CURRENTLY HAVING 22 STEPHEN MINISTERS IN ONE ON ONE RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH ANY KIND OF GRIEF AND LOSS. WE SEE JESUS BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN, AND WE NOW HAVE A LITERACY PROGRAM HELPING FAMILIES ON THE MARGINS OF LIFE WITH A READING PROGRAM, AN AFTERNOON PRESCHOOL, THAT IS FULL, PREPARED TO SUBSIDIZE THE COST OF 12 STUDENTS UP TO 75% OF THE COST IF THEY QUALIFY. CURRENTLY WE HAVE FOUR FAMILIES RECEIVING THE SUBSIDY. WITHOUT IT, THERE IS

NO PRESCHOOL FOR THOSE FOUR CHILDREN. AND OUR CONNECTION AND MINISTRY WITH THE CORNERSTONE LEARNING CENTER IN ASHTON CONTINUES TO GROW. WE CONTINUE OUR LIFE OF FOLLOW THE LEADER WHEN WE HAVE OUR 10,000 VILLAGES EVENT EVERY NOVEMBER, AND THE GARAGE SALE EVERY MAY TO SEND KIDS TO SUMMER CAMP, AND THAT'S JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG. YOU CAN GET THE FULLER PICTURE BY READING YOUR ANNUAL REPORT THAT WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TODAY. NONE OF THAT HAPPENS FAITHFULLY IF WE DON'T GET OUR GPS READING FROM OUR LORD. WE MIGHT SINCERELY INVEST OUR TIME AND ENERGY IN OTHER THINGS BUT IF THAT GPS READING DOESN'T COME FROM OUR LORD, WE WILL FIND OURSELVES SINCERELY WRONG AND HOPELESSLY LOST. YOUR GPS READING FROM HIM THROUGH HIS WORD IS THE ONLY WAY YOU WILL EVER KNOW "WHAT'S IN ALL OF THIS FOR ME?" AND "WHAT IS THIS GOING TO COST ME?" SO COME TO THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION AND RECEIVE ONCE AGAIN THE GIFT OF YOUR LIFETIME "THIS IS WHAT IS IN ALL OF THIS FOR YOU." AND THEN GO – AND LIVE YOUR LIFE FOLLOWING OUR LEADER WHO GIVES US A GPS SO WE DON'T GET LOST IN ALL OF OUR BUSINESS. BUT REMEMBER – YOU HAVE TO USE YOUR GPS TO KEEP FROM GETTING LOST. AMEN.