

SO CLOSE YOU CAN FEEL GOD'S BREATH

EPIPHANY 2 JANUARY 17, 2010 ISAIAH 62:1-5 PSALM 36

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11 JOHN 2:1-11

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST, GRACE TO YOU ONCE AGAIN THIS DAY AND PEACE THROUGH GOD OUR FATHER AND OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.

PLEASE JOIN ME IN PRAYER:

LORD, GIVE US EYES TO SEE YOUR GLORY WHEN IT BREAKS IN AMONG US. TEACH US TO BE EXPECTANT, EAGER TO GLIMPSE YOUR INTRUSIONS INTO OUR EVERYDAY LIVES. WE LONG FOR YOUR GLORY, FOR A SIGN THAT YOU ARE HERE FOR US. GIVE US EYES TO SEE YOU WHEN YOU COME TO US. AMEN.

I SUPPOSE YOU HAVE A STORY OR TWO FROM THE PAST CHRISTMAS SEASON. I WANT TO SHARE ONE OF MINE WITH YOU. TWO OF OUR THREE CHILDREN WERE HERE FOR CHRISTMAS AND ONE OF THE GIFTS I OPENED WAS FROM ALL THREE OF THEM. THE GIFT WAS A NOTE: GO DOWNSTAIRS TO THE STORAGE ROOM AND SEE WHAT WE GOT YOU FOR CHRISTMAS. SO I WENT DOWN TO THE STORAGE ROOM. NOTHING. THERE I FOUND A NOTE TAPED TO THE FLOOR. NOW GO TO THE DOWNSTAIRS BEDROOM FOR YOUR GIFT. SO I WENT TO THE DOWNSTAIRS BEDROOM, NOTHING. THERE WAS ANOTHER NOTE. NOW GO UPSTAIRS TO THE LIVING ROOM FOR YOUR GIFT. SO I WENT UPSTAIRS AND THERE WAS MY

GIFT. YOU DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO TELL YOU WHAT IS WAS DO YOU?
NO, IT WASN'T A PONY. DOWN HILL SKIS.

THAT IS A GOOD WAY TO THINK OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN FROM WHICH WE READ TOGETHER THIS MORNING. IT IS LIKE WE ARE ON A TREASURE HUNT WITH CLUE AFTER CLUE, MEANT TO LEAD US TO A TREASURE. 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 CAME THROUGH HIM, AND WITHOUT HIM NOT ONE THING CAME INTO BEING.”** YOU DON'T HAVE TO GIVE IT TOO MUCH TIME AND YOU REALIZE, THAT KIND OF SOUNDS LIKE GENESIS 1.1 **“IN THE BEGINNING, WHEN GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, THE EARTH WAS A FORMLESS VOID AND DARKNESS COVERED THE FACE OF THE DEEP.”** SO WHAT IS JOHN SUGGESTING HERE – THAT WITH JESUS THERE IS SOME TYPE OF NEW BEGINNING – NEW CREATION? YOU HAVE TO WONDER WHEN JOHN BEGINS HIS GOSPEL THIS WAY AND THEN CONTINUES USING LANGUAGE LIKE – THE NEXT DAY – AND THE NEXT DAY – AND THEN NOW THIS MORNING, OUR READING BEGINS WITH **“ON THE THIRD DAY...”** IT IS LIKE WE ARE BEING INVITED TO GO ON A TREASURE HUNT AND SO WE SHOULD BE WATCHING FOR CLUES.

I'M WONDERING – HAVE YOU EVER BEEN AT A PLACE IN YOUR LIFE WHERE FOR A MOMENT OF TIME, THE LID IS LIFTED OFF THE UNIVERSE AND YOU SEE THE HAND OF GOD MOVING?

A TIME WHEN THAT WHICH SEPARATES HEAVEN FROM EARTH WAS
A VERY THIN PLACE FOR YOU?

A TIME WHEN THE PRESENCE OF GOD SEEMED SO CLOSE TO YOU
THAT IS WAS AS IF YOU COULD FEEL HIS BREATH?

A TIME WHEN IT IS AS THOUGH THE CLOUDS OF DOUBT SEPARATED
AND YOU HAVE THIS VERY CONFIDENT SENSE OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND
LOVE?

A TIME WHEN HEAVEN AND EARTH WERE INTERSECTING WITH
EACH OTHER?

A TIME WHEN THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF GOD'S LOVE BURSTS
INTO YOUR PRESENT WORLD?

A TIME WHEN YOUR LIFE IS STOPPED IN ITS TRACKS AS YOU WERE
SURPRISED AND GIFTED WITH WONDER AND AWE BY SOMETHING TAKING
PLACE IN YOU OR AROUND YOU?

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A TIME WHEN YOU WERE STANDING ON A
MOUNTAIN TOP AMAZED AT THE CREATION ALL AROUND YOU. IT MIGHT
HAVE BEEN A TIME WHEN YOU WERE READING AND MEDITATING ON THE
SCRIPTURES AND YOU GOT ALL CAUGHT UP WITH WHAT THIS WORD WAS
TOUCHING INSIDE OF YOU. IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WHEN YOU WERE
SITTING AT THE BEDSIDE OF A DYING LOVED ONE. I WILL NEVER FORGET
SITTING AT THE HOSPITAL BEDSIDE OF MY DAD IN THE MIDDLE OF THE
NIGHT, 2:30 IN THE MORNING READING THE PSALMS AND HEARING HIM
TAKE HIS LAST BREATH. OR WITNESSING THE BIRTH OF A CHILD. IT

HAPPENS AT THIS BAPTISMAL FONT WHEN WATER IS POURED, WORDS ARE SPOKEN AND A LITTLE LIFE IS ADOPTED AND CLAIMED. IT HAPPENS WHEN A WORD OF FORGIVENESS IS SPOKEN OVER YOU, AND YOU KNOW YOU HAVE BEEN RELEASED FROM THE POWER OF THAT SIN. IT HAPPENS WHEN YOU COME TO THIS ALTAR RAIL AND SIMPLE WORDS ARE SPOKEN AND YOU RECEIVE SOME BREAD AND A LITTLE WINE AND YOU ARE GIVEN A FORETASTE OF ALL THAT IS TO COME AT THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF THE LAMB

TIMES WHEN THE SPACE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH IS VERY THIN. WHEN IT IS AS THOUGH YOU CAN FEEL THE BREATH OF GOD BREATHING ON YOU. AND THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF GOD'S LOVE IS BURSTING INTO THE WORLD, YOUR WORLD. CLUES, PIECES OF THE PUZZLE.

TODAY WE HAVE THIS STORY OF A MARRIAGE FEAST WHERE MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS IS PRESENT, ALONG WITH JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES. THE WINE RUNS OUT. JESUS IS APPROACHED TO COME UP WITH SOME HELP. SERVANTS ARE TOLD TO DO WHATEVER HE SAYS AND THEY OBEY HIS WORDS VERY CLOSELY. **WATCH CLOSELY NOW BECAUSE YOU ARE GOING TO GET A CLUE ON THIS TREASURE HUNT.** THE SERVANTS FILL THE SIX JARS TO THE BRIM AND SO THERE IS SOMEWHERE AROUND 150 TO 180 GALLONS OF WATER. IMAGINE IT. BUT WHEN THE OFFICIAL TASTES THE WATER IT HAS BECOME WINE AND HE COMPLIMENTS THE BRIDEGROOM ON SAVING THE BEST WINE UNTIL

LAST. THE BRIDEGROOM MUST HAVE STOOD THERE WITH HIS MOUTH HANGING OPEN, WHILE MARY IN THE BACKGROUND HAS THIS SMILE ON HER FACE, LOOKING AT HER SON WITH EYES EXPRESSING THANKS AND SAYING TO HERSELF, "I KNEW HE'D TAKE CARE OF THIS."

YOU SEE IT IS ALL A CLUE ABOUT A FUTURE WEDDING FEAST, WHERE THE WINE WILL NEVER RUN OUT, WHERE THE BEST WILL BE SAVED FOR LAST. IT IS EVEN PROMISED IN OUR OLD TESTAMENT LESSON THIS MORNING. THIS STORY IS NOT A PLACE TO STOP FOR LONG, BECAUSE IT IS ONLY ONE CLUE, THE FIRST CLUE, WITH MORE TO COME. YOU CAN READ THIS GOSPEL OF JOHN FOR YOURSELF AND SEE WHERE ALL THE CLUES TAKE YOU.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN CLUES OF YOUR OWN. CLUES FOR THE PUZZLE THAT IS YOUR LIFE. CLUES THAT SURPRISE YOU. CLUES THAT GIFT YOU. THE JARS OF YOUR LIFE MIGHT BE EMPTY, OR CONTAINING WATER THAT FEELS STALE AND UNUSABLE, OR NOT VERY HELPFUL. YOUR CLUE TODAY, YOUR SIGN THIS MORNING IS THAT THIS JESUS IS ONE WHO IS IN THE TRANSFORMATION BUSINESS, NOT JUST TURNING WATER INTO WINE, BUT TRANSFORMING LIFE OUT OF DEATH WHATEVER THAT DEATH MIGHT BE FOR YOU. THAT THIS JESUS IS ONE WHO BRINGS ABOUT NEW BEGINNINGS WHERE NO NEW BEGINNINGS EVEN SEEM POSSIBLE.

A STUDENT ONCE ASKED HIS TEACHER IF HE THOUGHT THEY DRANK ALL OF THE WINE AT THE WEDDING THAT JESUS HAD MADE FROM THE WATER. HIS PROFESSOR SAID, "NO, WE ARE STILL DRINKING OF IT

TODAY.” AND IT STILL IS GIVEN TO HAVE A TRANSFORMING EFFECT ON US.

SO COME AGAIN THIS MORNING TO THIS PLACE OF SURPRISE, OF GIFT, OF TRANSFORMATION WHERE YOU RECEIVE BREAD THAT IS MORE THAN BREAD AND WINE THAT IS MORE THAN WINE. DON'T BE IN SUCH A HURRY THAT YOU RUN THIS STOPSIGN. THIS STOPPING PLACE. COME TO THIS THIN PLACE, WHERE YOU GET SO CLOSE YOU CAN FEEL GOD'S BREATH, WHERE A NEW BEGINNING IS MADE POSSIBLE AGAIN. AND WHERE YOUR TRANSFORMATION CONTINUES BECAUSE OF HIS LIFE LIVING IN YOURS. AMEN.