

VEILS, PRESENCE, AND YOU

SOME VERY INTERESTING PICTURES COME TO MIND FROM THE WORDS IN TODAY'S READING. MOSES' FACE SO BRILLIANT HE NEEDS A VEIL, PAUL TALKING ABOUT A VEIL HIDING THE TRUTH, AND FINALLY THE BRILLIANCE OF JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION. THERE IS A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "LIGHT" AND "TRUTH" AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD AROUND US AND IN US. HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED A GODLY PERSON HAS THIS GLOW ABOUT THEM, SOMETHING THAT DRAWS YOU INTO THEM? I AM NOT TALKING ABOUT THE GLOW THAT MOSES HAD OR THE GLOW AND GLORY OF JESUS, BUT IT IS STILL NOTICEABLE.

THINK ABOUT A PERSON WHO HAS CROSSED OR IS CROSSING YOUR PATH THAT YOU RESPECTED BECAUSE WHEN THEY SPOKE YOU REALLY LISTENED TO THEIR WORDS. AS WORDS WERE SPOKEN YOU JUST SENSED AND KNEW THAT IT WAS TRUE AS WELL AS RIGHT.

WE SEEM, THESE DAYS TO EXPEND SO MANY WORDS IN THE NEWSPAPER, SPORTS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, FACE BOOK, AND OTHER MEANS WHERE WE CAN MAKE OUR OPINIONS KNOWN IN OH SO MANY WORDS! TO TAKE MEASURE AND BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR OUR WORDS MANY TIMES SEEMS TO BE RELEGATED TO THE TRASH HEAP. WE EXPECT PEOPLE TO NOT SPEAK THE TRUTH OR WHETHER THEY WILL EVER TELL THE TRUTH, WHO KNOWS!!!

HOWEVER, THE VERSES IN THIS MORNING'S READINGS CHALLENGE US AS DISCIPLES **TO BE DIFFERENT**. IN EPHESIANS 4:15 IT SAYS "...speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ." IN THIS SHORT PASSAGE WE CAN SEE THAT IN **BECOMING DIFFERENT**, WE BECOME MORE CHRIST-LIKE. BUT WHAT SHOULD WE DO IN ORDER THAT WE CAN BECOME MORE CHRIST-LIKE, SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE? WHAT HOLDS US BACK? WHAT VEILS DO WE WEAR THAT OTHERS MAY NOT SEE US OR MAYBE MORE CORRECTLY SEE OUR "FLAWS"? THERE ARE CERTAINLY MANY WAYS WE COVER UP OR VEIL OURSELVES.

THERE IS THIS PHRASE USED "A VEILED THREAT", MEANING WE ARE TRANSMITTING SOMETHING NEGATIVE IN OUR WORDS. "THREAT" MAY BE TOO STRONG A WORD, BUT WE COULD BY OUR WORDS INTIMIDATE ANOTHER PERSON. I HAVE HAD PEOPLE TELL ME OVER THE YEARS, SO AND SO REALLY INTIMIDATES THEM WITH THE TONE IN THEIR VOICE AND THE WORDS THEY USE. THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS I BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE, OUR HANDBOOK OF LIFE AS A DISCIPLE, MENTIONS WORDS AND OUR SPEECH NUMEROUS TIMES.

LOOK AROUND OUR CULTURE TODAY. DAY AFTER DAY YOU HEAR ANONYMOUS OR JUST REGULAR TWEETS, FACEBOOK COMMENTS, OR ANY OTHER 'VEIL' WE CAN HIDE BEHIND AND WE TYPE COMMENTS WE WOULD NEVER DREAM OF SAYING FACE TO FACE. STRANGE, WHEN YOU THINK OF THE NAME FACEBOOK. THERE IS NOTHING FACE TO FACE ABOUT IT.

WHAT CONCERNS ME IS THE FACT THAT YOU MAY COMMENT AND IF YOUR FRIEND HAS "FRIENDS" THEY SEE IT TOO. I WONDER IF YOU MEANT FOR SOMEONE YOU DON'T KNOW VERY WELL OR A FRIEND OF YOUR FRIEND TO SEE IT OR WAS IT SUPPOSED TO BE A "PRIVATE" JOKE BETWEEN YOU TWO? JUST LIKE MOM USED TO WARN US "*LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP*". WHEN YOU POST SOMETHING ONLINE, A WORD OF WISDOM, "MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE". THIS "VEIL OF COMMUNICATIONS" HAS ALLOWED US TO HIDE BEHIND OUR COMPUTER, PHONE OR TABLET, DRAWING US AWAY FROM REAL COMMUNICATION – FACE TO FACE.

WE CAN PUT ON A VEIL **TO HIDE OUR SIN TOO**. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE BEEN ASKED "HOW ARE YOU DOING?" AND THE QUICK ANSWER IS "JUST FINE" WHEN OUR WORLD IS IN CHAOS, THINGS ARE TURNED UPSIDE DOWN AND WE ARE HURTING INSIDE, BUT UP COMES OUR "VEIL'!!!

I HAVE SAID IT MANY TIMES, **RELIGION IS NOT ABOUT RULES AND REGULATIONS, THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, IT IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS!!!!** OH BUT YOU MAY SAY "*IT'S A PERSONAL THING, PRIVATE*" AND TO THAT I SAY, LOOK AT OUR TEACHER- OUR EXAMPLE, JESUS CHRIST. HE HAS THE MOST PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER, BUT HE SHARED HIMSELF WITH OTHERS RIGHT WHERE THEY WERE. OF COURSE HE HAD THE ADVANTAGE OF KNOWING THEIR HURTS, THEIR SINS, THEIR FEARS, AND DOUBTS.

WE TOO CAN HAVE INSIGHT INTO A SITUATION LIKE JESUS DID WITH THE GIFT OF DISCERNMENT, BUT IT IS A TIME-CONSUMING THING. MAKING A FRIEND, BEING A FRIEND AND LETTING THAT FRIEND TAKE UP YOUR TIME IS TIME-CONSUMING. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU AS WELL TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE THAT YOU CAN LET DOWN YOUR VEIL AND LET SOMEONE INTO YOUR SPACE, INTO YOUR LIFE.

WE CAN PUT UP A VEIL SO WE ARE NOT VULNERABLE TO OTHERS. WE HAVE BEEN HURT, SHOT DOWN BEFORE AND WE VOW "IT WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN". BUT YOU KNOW JESUS HEALS IF WE CHOSE TO LET HIM. HOW MANY TIMES IN JESUS' MINISTRY WAS HE SHOT DOWN FOR WHAT HE SAID, HURT WE CANNOT BEGIN TO FEEL, THE HURT HE ENDURED FOR US.

WE WILL BE REMINDED AS WE STAND BEFORE THE PATHWAY CALLED 'LENT'. WILL WE TAKE THAT PATHWAY AND DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW ALONG THE WAY OR WILL BE KEEP COVERED WITH A VEIL NOT ALLOWING GOD TO WORK WITHIN US AND THROUGH US?

IN EXODUS, MOSES' FACE SHONE BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. THE QUESTION FOR US IS, HOW MUCH TIME DO WE SPEND IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD? WELL, YOU SAY, PASTOR I DON'T KNOW OF ANY BURNING BUSH ANYWHERE AROUND THAT I CAN KNEEL DOWN AND BE IN THE

PRESENCE OF GOD! JUST LOOK AT THE VERSE FROM PSALM 46, VERSE 10 - "*Be Still And Know I Am God*", IN THE AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION IT SAYS "*Be still and know (recognize, understand) that I am God. I am the one who controls the world.*" **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PROMISED TO US THAT WE KNOW GOD AND HIS SON JESUS CHRIST!** THE PROMISE GOES BACK TO THE OLD TESTAMENT, HEAR THIS FROM EZEKIEL 36:26-27 "*Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a **new spirit within you**; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."* THAT "NEW SPIRIT" WAS THE HOLY SPIRIT, SO WE DON'T HAVE TO HIDE OR COVER UP WITH ANY TYPE OF VEIL ANYMORE! WE ARE FREE TO REACH OUT JUST LIKE JESUS DID. **(STORY).**

WE HAVE TO BE WILLING TO GIVE UP THE VEILS WE HAVE HIDDEN BEHIND,. THE "SELF" VEILS LIKE *SELF-RELIANCE*, *SELF-WILL*, AND THE BIG ONE, *SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS!* BY DEFINITION IT IS HAVING OR SHOWING A STRONG BELIEF THAT YOUR OWN ACTIONS, OPINIONS, ETC., ARE RIGHT AND OTHER PEOPLE'S ARE WRONG.

WHEN SOMEONE COMES THROUGH OUR DOOR, WHAT ARE OUR FIRST THOUGHTS? THERE IS ANOTHER CHILD OF GOD, REACHING OUT TO THEM WITH GRACE FORGIVENESS AND LOVE? OR DO WE GIVE THEM THE ONCE OVER LOOKING AT THEIR CLOTHES, THEIR HAIR, AND SIZING THEM UP? WHEN YOU FIRST WALKED THROUGH THE DOOR HOW DID YOU FEEL? WELCOMED? IT HAS BEEN SAID MANY TIMES THAT THIS IS A "WELCOMING CHURCH", BUT I HEARD IT HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN WHENEVER "THEN" WAS AND MAYBE NOT SO MUCH NOW.

HEARING THIS ARE YOU ARE THE DEFENSIVE, AS WE SAY "ARE YOUR HACKLES UP?" **OR ARE YOU THINKING WE CAN DO BETTER**, IT IS NOT JUST THE "JOB" OF THE GREETERS/USHERS OR THE PASTOR. IT IS UP TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US TO WELCOME SOMEONE INTO OUR HOUSE. IT IS OUR JOB IF WE SEE SOMEONE AND WE DON'T KNOW WHO THEY ARE TO WALK OVER AND INTRODUCE OURSELVES.

I WILL SAY IT AGAIN, **IF A FAMILY OR AN INDIVIDUAL IS SITTING BY THEMSELVES, IT IS UP TO THIS WELCOMING CHURCH BODY TO GO OVER AND INVITE THAT PERSON TO YOUR TABLE.** THE YOUTH VISITED AN AREA CHURCH LAST SUNDAY AND TOLD ME IT WAS VERY WELCOMING, THE PEOPLE TOOK NOTICE OF THEM. DO WE MAKE THAT FIRST TIME VISITOR FEEL AT HOME, OR THAT MEMBER THAT HAS COME BACK AFTER BEING GONE A LONG TIME? OR DO WE STAY IN OUR COMFORT ZONE GO TO THE SAME TABLE WITH THE SAME PEOPLE EVERY WEEK? EXPRESS YOUR FAITH BY LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR.

A QUESTION CAN BE WHY HAVE YOU COME TO CHURCH THIS MORNING? --OUT OF DUTY OR HABIT, OR ONLY TO HAVE A TIME OF SOCIAL INTERACTION? **OR HAVE YOU COME TO SEE AND FEEL GOD'S PRESENCE?** MAYBE WE DON'T COME EXPECTING HIM TO BE HERE OR JUST MAYBE WE KEEP OUR VEIL ON SO HE WON'T SEE US BECAUSE HE MIGHT JUST ASK US TO DO SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAT WILL HELP US GROW IN OUR FAITH?

WE CAN CHOOSE TO IGNORE HIM, BUT BELIEVE ME, I AM LIVING PROOF HE WILL KEEP COMING BACK AND ASKING. IF A SONG, A WORD OF SCRIPTURE OR THE WORDS OF A SERMON MAKE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE – GOOD! BECAUSE GOD IS CALLING YOU TO COME OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE, WHICH IS NOT EASY, BUT WILL BE REWARDING AND SATISFYING BELIEVE ME!!! LOOK AT JESUS' MINISTRY, HE WAS ALWAYS CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

WHEN WE CONTINUE TO WEAR OUR “VEILS”, THEY CAN GET VERY COMFORTABLE. WE LIKE WHERE WE ARE. JESUS ASKS US THOUGH AS HIS DISCIPLES TO BE DIFFERENT, TO REACH OUT. GOD REACHED OUT TO US, SENT HIS SON BECAUSE HE LOVED US AND HAD HIM DIE ON A CROSS FOR ALL OF US. NOW WE CAN GO INTO HIS PRESENCE AS IT SAYS IN HEBREWS 10:19-22 *“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body ...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.”*

WHEN JESUS' WHEN WORK WAS DONE ON THE CROSS, THE TEMPLE VEIL TORE IN TWO PIECES AND THE HOLY OF HOLIES WAS OPENED FOR ALL. JESUS CAN TEAR AWAY OUR VEILS AND WE CAN SEE AND FEEL THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN OUR LIVES, BUT WE MUST *"Take time. Give God time to reveal Himself to you. Give yourself time to be silent and quiet before Him, waiting to receive, through the Spirit, the assurance of His presence with you, His power working in you."*

AMEN.