

## WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING GOD TO DO?

THAT QUESTION MAY CERTAINLY HAVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE IN CHURCH THIS MORNING. WE MAY EVEN SAY THAT THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION MAY HAVE A DIFFERENT ANSWER TOMORROW OR MAYBE EVEN AFTER WALKING OUT OUR DOORS DEPENDING ON EVENTS OF THE DAY IN OUR LIFE. HOWEVER, NO MATTER WHAT EVENT LARGE OR SMALL THAT MAY HAPPEN, IT REALLY COMES DOWN TO THE SHAPE OUR FAITH IS IN. **FAITH IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR EXPECTATIONS HOW GOD WILL INTERACT IN OUR LIVES.**

AS IN TODAY'S GOSPEL "FAITH" CAN BE LIMITED AND A BARRIER TO THAT WHICH GOD CAN DO IN OUR LIVES. JESUS HEALED ONLY A FEW SICK PEOPLE AND WAS UNABLE TO DO ANY MIRACLES! WHY? BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF! WE CAN ASSUME THAT THE PEOPLE OF HIS HOMETOWN, NAZARETH, WERE PRACTICING JEWS, SO THEY MUST HAVE THOUGHT THEIR FAITH WAS IN PRETTY GOOD SHAPE. BUT BEING FAMILIAR WITH SOMETHING, WE TEND TO GET IN A COMFORT ZONE AND WHEN JESUS COMES TO US IN WAY THAT IS NOT IN OUR COMFORT ZONE WE CAN REJECT HIM JUST LIKE THE PEOPLE LIKE OF NAZARETH DID. WHO AMONG US WOULD BLOCK THE WORK OF OUR MISSION STATEMENT – "TO BE A CARING FAMILY OF DISCIPLES WHO KNOW CHRIST AND MAKE CHRIST KNOWN IN OUR COMMUNITY AND AROUND THE WORLD:"

IF WE HAVE FAITH IN THAT STATEMENT, THEN GOD WILL, WITH THE HELP OF HOLY SPIRIT, THROUGH US MAKE IT HAPPEN. **Isaiah 55:10-12** "10 For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there but water the earth and make it bring forth and bud that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. 12 For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

**WHAT WILL THAT LOOK LIKE?** WE NEED TO PRAY FOR GOD'S GRACE AND DIRECTION. THIS IS GOD'S CHURCH AND WE ARE HERE FOR ONLY BRIEF TIME TO BRING GLORY TO HIM AND LET OTHERS KNOW OF HIS LOVE AND FORGIVENESS – IT IS NOT SOMETHING WE JUST KEEP TO OURSELVES FOR OUR OWN ENJOYMENT.

**THERE IS ANOTHER TRAIT OF "FAITH" THAT WE NEED TO BE REMINDED OF – PSALM 118:6** "The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" AND OF COURSE, MY FAVORITE FROM CHRONICLES WHERE IT SAYS HE HAS PLANS FOR GOOD NOT EVIL AND FOR A HOPE AND FUTURE AND ISN'T THAT WHAT OUR DESIRE FOR CENTENNIAL – A FUTURE. **THE QUESTION IS "BY OUR FAITH ARE WE EXPECTING GOD TO PROVIDE A FUTURE FOR CENTENNIAL?** IF WE THINK LIKE THE PEOPLE OF NAZARETH THEN – NO WAY!!!

THAT IS WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT WE KNOW THE SHAPE OF OUR FAITH. IN THIS CULTURE WE ARE SO OBSESSED WITH OUR BODY, THE PHYSICAL, BUT PAY LITTLE OR NO ATTENTION TO THE SPIRITUAL. **AS DISCIPLES, HOW CAN WE DO THE BEST FOR GOD IF WE AREN'T IN SHAPE. HOW CAN WE EXPECT HIM TO DO THINGS FOR AND MORE IMPORTANTLY THROUGH US IF WE ARE IN POOR SPIRITUAL SHAPE?**

**WHAT ARE SIGNS THAT WE MAY NOT BE IN THE BEST SPIRITUAL SHAPE?** LOOK BACK AT TODAY'S OLD TESTAMENT READING. WHAT KIND OF SPIRITUAL SHAPE WERE THE PEOPLE IN? GOD THROUGH HIS PROPHETS WARNED THEM. THEY WERE FOLLOWING EVIL WAYS, NOT KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS. HAVE THINGS CHANGED ANY? NOT REALLY. IN VERSE 14 WE ARE TOLD THEY, BEING ISRAEL, ***DID NOT LISTEN, BUT STIFFENED THEIR NECKS AND DID NOT BELIEVE IN GOD.***

**WHERE IS OUR FAITH THIS SUNDAY MORNING? WHERE WILL IT BE MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY?** WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND OUR CONFIRMATION CLASS VISITED A JEWISH SYNAGOGUE I REMEMBERING BEING IMPRESSED EVEN BACK THEN THAT THEIR FAITH AND EVERYDAY LIFE WAS SO INTERWOVEN IT COULD NOT BE SEPARATED. DID THEY LIVE A PERFECT LIFE NO, BUT IS OUR FAITH WOVEN INTO OUR LIFE DAY AFTER DAY, HOUR BY HOUR? YES WE DO HAVE GOD'S GRACE AND FORGIVENESS BUT WE CAN NOT ABUSE THAT GIFT AND SIN KNOWING GOD'S GRACE IS THERE. AS DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S TERM "**CHEAP GRACE**" – WHICH HE DEFINED AS *"the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ."*

HE ALSO HAD A TERM "**COSTLY GRACE**" – "costly grace" confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus. It comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. It is costly because it compels one to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

IT GOES ON IN 2 KINGS TO LIST THE VARIOUS THINGS THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL DID THAT WENT AGAINST GOD. BUILT IMAGES AND PRACTICED WORSHIP OF THE EARTH AND ALL THE GODS THAT WENT ALONG WITH THE PRACTICE.

**NOW WE LOOK AT THOSE "POOR" ISRAELITES AND SHAKE OUR HEADS, BUT ARE WE REALLY ANY DIFFERENT?** NOT ALL THAT MUCH. **MUCH OF THE "ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT" HAS BECOME A RELIGION WITH MANY TENETS OF FAITH SIMILAR TO TENETS OF OUR FAITH.** MANY WORSHIP FITNESS AND DIET WITH THE SAME ZEAL. *IN THESE VERSES THE PEOPLE "WORSHIPED" AT TEMPLES OF THESE FAKE GODS--THE WAY MANY ARE OBSESSED WITH FITNESS AND THE TIME IT TAKES AWAY FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS, CAN NOT BE GOOD. JUST TAKE A DRIVE OUT ON HICKMAN ROAD AND LOOK AT THE GIANT FITNESS CENTER, IT IS LIKE ENTERING A CATHEDRAL! I AM NOT SAYING IT IS WRONG TO BE FIT, BUT WHEN IT TAKES OVER YOUR LIFE AND PULLS YOU AWAY FROM IMPORTANT THINGS THEN SOMETHING HAS GONE OFF THE TRACK.*

**MUSIC, IT SEEMS IT HAS BEEN A FAVORITE "PUNCHING BAG" OF EACH GENERATION,** BUT I CHALLENGE YOU TO TAKE THE TIME AND LISTEN TO MUSIC OF THE PAST AND WATCH OR LISTEN TO A VIDEO AND LYRICS TODAY. YOUNG PEOPLE, YOU MAY BE WHISPERING WORDS UNDER YOUR BREATH, BUT MUCH OF THE MUSIC CONTAINS WORDS NOT WHOLESOME AND VIDEOS NOT FIT BUT THE LOVE OF MONEY PUSHES SOME MODERN ARTISTS TO GO OVER THE LINE. I WATCHED PARTS OF RHIANNA'S' LATEST VIDEO WITH BLOOD, NUDITY, AND LANGUAGE – THIS IS "ENTERTAINMENT"? I AM NOT SAYING THERE ISN'T GOOD MUSIC OUT THERE ANYMORE, BUT MUCH OF IT IS NOT UPLIFTING.

THE OTHER THING WE ALL FACE IN THIS CULTURE THROUGH MUSIC, BOOKS, MOVIES AND THE LANGUAGE IS **WE ARE BECOMING DE-SENSITIZED AND WITH THAT WILL COME A HARDNESS OF HEART,**

THE VERY CAUSE OF ISRAEL'S DOWNFALL AND IGNORING GOD. HOW MANY TIMES ON THE NEWS OR NUMEROUS TELEVISION PROGRAMS ARE WE WARNED THE FOLLOWING IS 'GRAPHIC' AND THOSE WORDS SEEMED TO DRAW ON OUR CURIOSITY TO WANT TO SEE IF IT'S TRUE OR HOW BAD CAN IT BE.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF VERSES IN THE BIBLE THAT WARN US TO BE **WATCHFUL OF WHAT WE SEE, WHAT WE HEAR AND GUARD OUR HEARTS AND MINDS**. GOD KNOWS THOSE ARE THE VERY VEHICLES THAT CAN BE USED TO REVEAL THOSE THINGS JESUS MENTIONED THAT CAN COME OUT OF THE HEART – MATTHEW 15:19 *"But what comes out of the mouth gets its start in the heart. It's from the heart that comes evil arguments, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, lies, and cussing."* PROVERBS 4:23 *"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."*

**THAT IS THE VERY REASON WE ALL, YOUNG AND OLD, MUST HAVE A FIRM FOUNDATION OF FAITH AND EXPECT GOD TO DO SOMETHING WITH AND IN OUR LIVES**. EACH ONE OF US HERE THIS MORNING IS SPECIAL AND HAS BEEN **UNIQUELY GIFTED BY GOD FOR PURPOSE IN THIS LIFE**. WE CAN CHOOSE TO IGNORE IT, BECOMING STIFF NECKED AND FOLLOW OUR OWN WAYS, BUT WE WILL NEVER, EVER BE SATISFIED WITH LIFE. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SOMETHING MISSING AND UNFORTUNATELY MANY NEVER REALIZE IT UNTIL LATE, LATE IN LIFE THAT INDEED SOMETHING IS MISSING DESPITE ALL THEIR OWN ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

GOD IS THERE AND WHEN WE ARE EXPECTING GOD TO DO SOMETHING HE WILL! **WE CAN EXPECT FROM GOD HIS PRESENCE**. IT IS PROMISED THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT PSALMS, ISAIAH AND RIGHT INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT BY JESUS HIMSELF "UNTIL THE END OF THE AGE".

WE CAN EXPECT '**PEACE THAT PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING**'. **WE CAN EXPECT HIS PROTECTION**. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE LOOKED BACK ON A SITUATION AND REALIZED GOD WAS THERE WATCHING OVER US. NOW IF WE DO SOMETHING DUMB WE LIKELY WILL SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES! THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT GOD WILL GIVE US POWER TO DO THAT WHICH HE ASKS OF US IN MINISTRY.

I NOTICED SOMETHING IN PREPARING THIS MESSAGE, THE WORD '**IMPOSSIBLE**'. WITH FAITH, EXPECTING GOD TO DO SOMETHING, WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT FAITH IS - **THE LETTERS OF IMPOSSIBLE BECOME "I'M POSSIBLE"**. WE CAN, MATTHEW 19:26 "Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible."

REMEMBER IN TODAY'S GOSPEL READING THAT THE UNBELIEF OF THOSE IN NAZARETH WAS NOT EXPECTING GOD TO DO THINGS THROUGH THIS HOMETOWN BOY, JESUS! **IF WE ACT IN THE SAME WAY, NOT EXPECTING "GOD THINGS" FOR CENTENNIAL, THEN JUST AS IN NAZARETH, NOT MUCH WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED**. WE CAN ROLL IN AND ROLL OUT EVERY SUNDAY AND CHANGE NOTHING. MEANWHILE PEOPLE OUT THERE, WHO DESPERATELY NEED TO HEAR A MESSAGE OF LOVE AND GRACE AND NEED TO SEE AN EXAMPLE THAT THERE IS SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT US FROM THE CULTURE. WE CAN AFFECT THE CULTURE, ONE PERSON AT A TIME JUST LIKE WE PROFESS IN OUR MISSION STATEMENT OF "**MAKE CHRIST KNOWN IN OUR COMMUNITY AND AROUND THE WORLD.**"

**"FAITH" IS EXPECTING GOD; I PRAY WE ALL GO FROM THIS PLACE AND LIVE THAT EACH DAY AND WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE. AMEN.**