

## SEEKING AND SERVING

IN THE READING FROM AMOS IF WE LOOK AT THE PREVIOUS VERSES, THE LORD AND AMOS WERE HAVING A LITTLE TALK ABOUT THE COMING DROUGHT THAT WOULD RAVAGE THE LAND. BUT IN THE LAST TWO VERSES, THE TALK IS ABOUT A VERY DIFFERENT TYPE OF DROUGHT – ONE OF GOD'S WORD!!! IT IS VERY CLEAR “WHEN I WILL SEND HUNGER AND THIRST ON THE LAND, NEITHER A HUNGER FOR BREAD NOR A THIRST FOR WATER, BUT OF HEARING THE LORD'S WORD.” THEN AT THE END “BUT THEY WON'T FIND IT”.

**THE QUESTION TODAY IS “ARE WE SEEKING THE LORD'S WORD?” “WHERE ARE WE SEEKING IT?” WHAT IF THE LORD'S WORD WERE NO WHERE TO BE FOUND?** IF YOU TAKE TIME TO READ ABOUT WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD, EVEN OUR OWN COUNTRY, YOU CAN SEE CRACKS HERE AND THERE OF THAT POSSIBILITY.

**WE, NOT UNLIKE THE ISRAELITES, HAVE TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT THE LORD'S WORD IS JUST THERE,** AND THE PROBLEM IS IT REMAINS THERE A CLOSED BOOK NOT EVEN GIVEN A SECOND THOUGHT. NOW I AM NOT GOING TO ASK FOR A SHOW OF HANDS, BUT HOW MANY OF US SEEK THE LORD'S WORD OUT ON A DAILY BASIS? IF THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION IS BASED ON THE UPPER ROOM BOOKS, NOT MANY OF US! NOT THAT THAT IS THE ONLY MATERIAL THAT CAN BE USED. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE SEEK THE LORD'S WORDS DAILY!!! WHEN YOU GO THROUGH A DAY, WHAT TYPE OF THOUGHTS FILL YOUR MIND? IF FILLED WITH THE WORD, IT MAKES A BETTER DAY FOR YOU AND THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU, TRY IT SOMETIME!

JUST THINK BACK AND RECALL THE NUMBER OF TIMES YOU REMEMBERED THE LORD'S WORDS THAT SPOKE TO YOU AT THAT TIME OR WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND SPOKE A WORD TO YOU. THIS TO ME IS WHY **IT IS THE “LIVING WORD”**. THE GOOD LORD HAS GIVEN US THOSE WORDS SO WE CAN LIVE OUR LIVES!!! THE LORD TOLD THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL IN DEUTERONOMY 11:18-21 *“Place these words on your hearts. Get them deep inside you. Tie them on your hands and foreheads as a reminder. Teach them to your children. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning until you fall into bed at night. Inscribe them on the doorposts and gates of your cities so that you'll live a long time, and your children with you,”*

**IT IS GOD'S DESIRE FOR US TO KNOW THESE “LIVING WORDS” BECAUSE JESUS TOLD US IN JOHN 8:32,** *“And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free”*. THERE ARE NO OTHER WORDS IN THIS CREATION THAT HAVE SUCH POWER IN THEM, BECAUSE OF THAT FAITH AND HOPE IN JESUS CHRIST. HERE IS AN INTERESTING POINT IN VERSES 31 JESUS SAYS “So He said to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples.”

**HOW CAN WE REACH OUT WHEN WE HAVE NO FOUNDATION ON WHICH TO SPEAK? RECALL THE PARABLE ABOUT MAN BUILDING HIS HOUSE ON THE SAND AND WHEN STORMS CAME THE HOUSE FELL.** WHEN WE DO NOT SEEK OUT THE LORD'S WORD WE ARE JUST LIKE THAT HOUSE BECAUSE THEN OUR FOUNDATION IS NOT ON THE ROCK, JESUS CHRIST, AND WE WILL CERTAINLY NOT BE ABLE TO STAND UP TO THOSE DIFFICULT TIMES.

IN PAUL'S ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE COLOSSIANS TODAY HE TELLS THEM "TO **REMAIN WELL ESTABLISHED AND ROOTED IN THE FAITH**" THE ONLY WAY TO DO THIS TO SEEK THE LORD'S WORD AND DISCOVER IN IT THE FOUNDATION OF AND HOPE OF YOUR FAITH.

ONE MORE THOUGHT ABOUT SEEKING THE LORD'S WORDS. IF ALL EVIDENCE OF THE LORD'S WORDS WERE NO WHERE TO BE FOUND EXCEPT WITH YOU AND WHAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR HEART, COULD YOU RECALL ENOUGH TO BE AN INSPIRATION? ONLY YOU CAN ANSWER THAT QUESTION, ONLY YOU AND GOD KNOW WHAT IS IN YOUR HEART. THAT IS WHY I WOULD ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO SEEK THE WORDS OF THE LORD AND MAKE ROOM FOR THEM IN YOUR HEART. BECAUSE THERE WILL COME A DAY WHEN YOU MAY PERSONALLY NEED THEM OR MORE IMPORTANTLY YOU WILL BE ABLE TO HELP SOMEONE AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE. **THIS IS WHY WE HAVE BEEN PUT ON THIS EARTH - TO HELP OTHERS AND BRING GLORY TO GOD!!!**

NOW A WORD OF CAUTION HERE, **JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE CAN RATTLE OFF A BUNCH OF BIBLE VERSES DOESN'T MEAN THEY KNOW THE TRUTH WITHIN THOSE VERSES.** WE CAN RECALL THAT VERSES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WHERE THE LORD TALKS "*How His people draw near with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, while their hearts are far from Me.*" WHEN HIS WORD DWELLS IN OUR HEARTS DO THE WORDS MEAN SOMETHING. WE WILL NEVER KEEP HIS WORDS IN OUR HEARTS IF WE DO NOT TAKE THE TIME TO SEEK OUT HIS WORD. AFTER ALL, IT IS AS SIMPLE AS READING ONE VERSE A DAY AND KEEPING IT IN YOUR HEART.

RECENTLY AS YOU KNOW I HAVE DONE SOME FUNERALS WITH GRAVESIDE SERVICES. I WAS RIDING HOME WITH MY WIFE FROM MAYO AND I SAID TO HER "YOU KNOW WHAT COMES TO MIND? THE VERY FIRST WORDS I USE AT THE GRAVESIDE" - *IN THE MIDST OF LIFE, WE ARE IN DEATH; FROM WHOM CAN WE SEEK HELP? PSALM 128 "OUR HELP IS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH".* TOMORROW IS NOT GUARANTEED FOR ANY OF US.

I JUST DID A FUNERAL YESTERDAY FOR A 32 YEAR OLD YOUNG MAN. I CAN BE FAIRLY CERTAIN HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO A LONG LIFE – HE HAD JUST GOT ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED AND NOW HE IS GONE. **LIFE IS SERIOUS BUSINESS AND WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE MUST MAKE THE MOST OF EACH DAY, NOT ON THINGS THAT WILL RUST OR BE STOLEN, BUT THAT WILL LAST LONG AFTER WE ARE GONE.** I HAVE OBSERVED THOSE LASTING TRAITS IN FAMILIES THAT I HAVE RECENTLY CONDUCTED FUNERALS FOR, AND A GOOD PLACE TO START IS SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE ADDED TO YOU. GOD WANTS YOU, NOT PART TIME, BUT FOR FULL EMPLOYMENT – NOW.

THERE WAS A SONG AT YESTERDAY'S FUNERAL CALLED "IF TOMORROW NEVER COMES". **THE GIST OF THE SONG IS IF TOMORROW NEVER COMES WILL THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU KNOW WHAT WAS INSIDE YOU, THE LINE** "So tell that someone that you love Just what you're thinking of, if tomorrow never comes" **WE COULD ADD THE WORDS FORGIVE THEM , SORRY FOR WHAT I DID, AND MANY MORE!!! WHEN WE CLAIM WE ARE**

**DISCIPLES OF JESUS, FAITH IS ACTION.** WE CANNOT JUST SEEK THE WORD OF GOD, BUT LIVE IT EVERY DAY WE ARE ON THIS EARTH. **THAT LEADS ME TO THE OTHER WORD IN THE MESSAGE - "SERVING"**. THE READING FROM LUKE AS USUAL HAS DEEPER MEANING WE CAN "PULL" FROM IT THAN WHAT IS THERE ON THE SURFACE. IT WOULD BE VERY EASY TO LOOK AT THIS SHORT STORY AND SAY MARY SAT AT THE

FEET OF JESUS AND LISTEN TO JESUS WHILE MARTHA RUSHED FROM POT TO PAN WORRYING ABOUT ALL THE PREPARATIONS, WHICH IN THE END WERE REALLY NOT THAT IMPORTANT.

THERE IS MUCH MORE HERE. **AFTER ALL JESUS TOLD US HE HAD COME “TO SERVE NOT BE SERVED”.** **AS USUAL THE LESSON IS IN THE DETAILS.** FROM PREVIOUS EVENTS WE KNOW BOTH WOMEN REALLY LOVED THE LORD, OF THAT THERE WAS NO DOUBT FOR BOTH WERE AT THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

**HOWEVER, WE MUST REMEMBER WHEN WE SERVE WE ARE OPEN TO DO WHAT IS NEEDED, NOT WHAT WE THINK IS NEEDED. TOO MANY TIMES WE SERVE THE WAY WE WANT TO SERVE.** RICHARD FOSTER WRITES IN THE CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE THAT SERVING IS SOMETIME IS JUST BEING THERE. IN TODAY’S WORLD THAT IS A VERY DIFFICULT THING FOR SOME TO DO.

COMMENTARY TELLS US JESUS WAS IN HIS LAST DAYS AND REALLY DID NOT WANT THIS MULTI-COURSE MEAL, BUT A SIMPLY MEAL AND THE COMPANY OF MARTHA AND MARY. **MARTHA EVEN THOUGHT SHE HAD THE BEST INTENTIONS. SHE WAS SERVING THE WAY SHE THOUGHT JESUS WANTED, NOT ASKING.**

*LOOK AT MARTHA WE CAN VIEW WHAT CAN GO WRONG WHEN SERVING. MARTHA IS PREOCCUPIED WITH GETTING EVERYTHING READY, SOUND LIKE SOMEONE YOU MIGHT KNOW? THEN THIS CONCERN EVOLVES INTO COMPLAINING SHE IS GETTING NO HELP. OF COURSE WE DON'T KNOW ANYONE WHO DOES THAT DO WE? FINALLY, **MARTHA GETS RATHER BOSSY, AND DEMANDS JESUS “TELL HER TO HELP ME”.** MARTHA HAS BECOME ANGRY, FOUND FAULT WITH MARY AND REALLY IS QUESTIONING GOD'S CARE BY BEING DEMANDING OF JESUS. NOW WE NEVER TELL GOD WHAT HE SHOULD DO, DO WE?*

I WOULD SAY TO YOU ALL THAT GOD KNOWS VERY WELL THE WAY I WANT ALL THIS SURGERY STUFF TO GO!!! I HAVE EXPRESSED IT MORE THAN A FEW TIMES. BETWEEN MY WIFE AND HIS STILL SMALL VOICE **BOTH REMINDING ME THAT HIS LOVE AND GRACE ARE THE “BETTER PART” AND WILL NOT BE TAKEN AWAY FORM ME OR ANY OF US!!!**

WE CAN, LIKE FOSTER SUGGESTS, **SERVE JUST BY BEING THERE – LIKE MARY.** FOR AT JESUS' FEET SHE FOUND **INFORMATION** - WHY THINGS ARE THE WAY THEY ARE. SHE ALSO FOUND **INSTRUCTION** - **WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO DO AND NOT SUPPOSED TO DO.** **CORRECTION** - WE CAN BE TAUGHT HARD LESSONS AFTER WE HAVE FAILED. LASTLY, AND VERY IMPORTANT, **MARY DISCOVERED **DIRECTION** - WE CAN LEARN WHERE WE ARE TO GO. NOW ALL THESE THINGS ARE KEY INGREDIENTS TO SERVING HIM AND OTHERS.** **WHEN WE WAIT ON GOD, HE WILL CALL US AND HE WILL PREPARE US. WHEN WE WAIT ON GOD IT IS IN HIS TIMING NOT OURS. THEN WE WILL BE FOCUSED AND READY TO SERVE.** MAY WE ALL BE SEEKERS AND SERVERS. AMEN.