

MAJORING IN THE MINORS

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING APPEARS TO BE ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE STORIES WHERE **JESUS CONFRONTS THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DAY BY HEALING A WOMAN WHO WAS BENT OVER AND COULD NOT STAND STRAIGHT**. AGAIN, WHEN WE TAKE THE TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE AND EVENTS IN IT, **WE BEGIN TO REALIZE THERE IS MORE TO A STORY LIKE THIS**. AS PAUL HARVEY USED TO SAY AFTER READING A STORY, *there was more and left us "hanging" with the words "stay tune for the rest of the story"*. **HOW MUCH MORE DEPTH THE BIBLE HAS**, THE BIBLE IS LIKE A WELL FROM WHICH WE CAN DRAW MORE AND MORE FROM, IF WE ARE WILLING TO PUT IN THE "WORK" DRAWING FROM IT TO RECEIVE THE LIVING WATER TO SATISFY AND STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH. **WE CAN DISCOVER AND BE JOYFUL FINDING HOW PASSAGES AND STORIES WE STUDY CAN FIND USE IN OUR DAILY LIVES OR WE CAN HELP OTHER IN THEIR LIVES**.

THE KEY PEOPLE THAT MAKE UP TODAY'S STORY ARE JESUS, THE WOMAN, THE LEADER OF THE SYNAGOGUE AND HIS BAND OF MERRY MEN AND LASTLY THE CROWD. THE PARTS EACH PLAY IN THIS STORY ARE SOMETHING WE NEED TO LOOK AT AND APPLY TO OUR LIVES THIS MORNING. **ALONG WITH WORSHIPING GOD, AREN'T WE HERE TO HEAR GOD'S WORD AND LEARN MORE? IT IS A LIFETIME STUDY WITH NO ONE OF IF US EVER KNOWING IT ALL!** REMEMBER IN I CORINTHIANS 13:12 "*Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely...*"

GOD DESIRES FOR US TO KNOW HIM, IT IS THE VERY REASON HE SENT HIS SON! WE CANNOT JUST BLOW IT OFF AND FOLD OUR ARMS AND SAY "I'M DONE LEARNING THIS STUFF!". WE HEAR, WE LEARN AND WE DO, THAT IS THE WAY OF A DISCIPLE, A FOLLOWER OF JESUS.

THERE IS AN INTERESTING OBSERVATION HERE IN THIS STORY WITH ALL THAT WAS GOING ON. **THIS WOMAN WHO HAD HAD THIS CONDITION FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS, AND WHERE WAS SHE? IN CHURCH!!!** any one of those years she could have given up on god, turned away, and never again stepped inside a church. **HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE DONE THIS FOR A REASON FAR LESS THAN THIS WOMAN COULD HAVE USED?** THINK OF IT, here is this woman with a physical infirmity, a woman who knew the discomforts of everyday life, a woman who could have been easily embarrassed about her condition, a woman who had more than one reason for not going to church, but she attended.

IT APPEARS IN TODAY'S CULTURE THAT TOLERANCE, ENDURANCE, "STICKING WITH IT" ARE NOT TRAITS HELD IN HIGH REGARD. WHETHER IT IS A JOB, A RELATIONSHIP OR WHATEVER, CULTURE SAYS "WE HAVE RIGHT TO WALK WAY" OR "IT'S JUST NOT WORTH IT". **IT MUST MAKE GOD SAD WHEN WE WALK AWAY FROM RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE, SAYING "THEY ARE JUST NOT WORTH IT"**. I ASK IF PEOPLE ARE NOT WORTH IT, THAN WHAT IS? I WILL MAKE AN OBSERVATION HERE AND A STATEMENT THAT MAY IRRITATE SOME OF YOU, BUT HERE IT IS.

WHEN AN ANIMAL BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT THAN PEOPLE OR A SUBSTITUTE FOR A HUMAN RELATIONSHIP SOMETHING IS WRONG. I AM NOT SAYING IT IS WRONG TO LOVE AN ANIMAL, BUT WHEN THEY REPLACE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE, THINGS HAVE GOTTEN OUT OF PERSPECTIVE, SOMETHING JESUS IS REMINDING OF US IN TODAY'S STORY. THE LEADER OF THE SYNAGOGUE HAD

LET RULES BECOME MORE IMPORTANT THAN PEOPLE'S NEEDS. **THE BIBLE IS A GREAT TEACHER OF HOW TO LIVE LIFE IN BALANCE, TODAY, NOT JUST BACK IN JESUS' TIME.**

NOTE TOO, THAT **THE WOMAN DESPITE HER CONDITION, WHEN CALLED, CAME TO JESUS.** THE SIMPLE ACT OF COMING WHEN CALLED SPEAK VOLUMES TO US THIS MORNING! WE ARE BURDENED TOO WITH A VARIETY OF "THINGS" FROM ILLNESS, WORRY, AND SINS WE CAN'T SEEM TO CAST OFF. BUT, JESUS' CALLING THIS WOMAN INVITES US ALL TO HIM. IN MATTHEW 11:28 IN JESUS OWN WORDS HE SAYS *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."* HIS INVITATION CONTINUES TO SPEAK TO US TODAY IN OUR CONDITION, RIGHT WHERE WE ARE THIS MORNING. ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS COME.

THE WOMAN, DESPITE HER CURRENT CONDITION, **CAME TO JESUS JUST AS SHE WAS!** I CAN'T RECALL HOW PEOPLE I HAVE KNOWN OVER THE YEARS HAD THIS **IDEA OR MISCONCEPTION THAT SOMEHOW THEY HAD TO "CLEAN UP THEIR ACT" BEFORE THEY ANSWERED HIS CALL.** WE CAN COME TO JESUS **BECAUSE** OF OUR CONDITION. THIS WOMAN IS A SYMBOL FOR US, A VISIBLE SYMBOL. THAT WE CAN COME AS THE OLD HYMN SAYS *"JUST AS I AM"*. IN ONE OF THE VERSES ARE THE WORDS "Just as I am, tho' tossed about, With many a conflict, many a doubt, Fighting within and fears without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come! ANOTHER VERSE "Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve, Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!" JESUS DID NOT SAY IT IN THIS STORY, BUT IN OTHERS, JESUS COMMENTS THAT "YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WHOLE". THIS WOMAN MUST HAVE HAD A VERY STRONG FAITH TO BE COMING TO THE SYNAGOGUE FOR ALL THOSE YEARS. IT IS AN EXAMPLE OF THOSE DEFINING WORDS IN HEBREWS " Now faith is the assurance of [things] hoped for, the conviction of things not seen " **THIS WOMAN CERTAINLY MUST OF HAD HOPE THAT ONE DAY SHE WOULD BE HEALED BY A GOD SHE NEVER HAD SEEN HER FAITH IS AMAZING!**

IT IS JESUS' DESIRE TO TOUCH EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US JUST AS HE DID THE WOMAN IN THIS STORY. THERE IS A GREAT PICTURE HERE OF OUR SPIRITUAL WALK. OUR FAITH BRING US TO WORSHIP, BECAUSE WE HOPE TO MEET HIM HERE. WE HEAR THE WORDS OF JESUS, WE ANSWER HIS CALL BY COMING ESPECIALLY ON COMMUNION SUNDAYS. WE ARE TOUCHED BY HIM, AND WE ARE MADE WHOLE, FREED FROM OUR CONDITION TO BECOME A WITNESS GIVING PRAISE AND BRINGING GLORY TO GOD.

THIS WOMAN WAS A SIGNPOST TO DIRECT OTHERS TO GOD. IN THIS WORLD WE TOO ARE "SIGNPOSTS" TO POINT TO GOD, BECAUSE IF NOT US, WHO? WITH EVERYDAY EVENTS POINTING TO REMOVING ANY PUBLIC SIGNS OF RELIGION, GOD DESIRES US TO NOT ONLY BE A SIGNPOST, BUT A LAMPPOST THAT SHINES A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

ANOTHER CHARACTER IN OUR STORY TODAY IS THE SYNAGOGUE LEADER. NOW I COULD LEAVE THE STORY WITH THE FOCUS ON THE WOMAN, BUT **THIS LEADER IS IMPORTANT TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THIS STORY.** WE HAVE A LESSON TO LEARN FROM HIM. **HE HAD WITNESSED A MIRACLE, BUT BECAUSE OF LEGALISM HE HAD BEEN MORE "BENT OUT OF SHAPE" THAN BENT OVER AS THE WOMAN WAS. HIS CONDITION WAS EVERY BIT AS DISABLING AS THE WOMAN'S CONDITION.** RULES HAD OVERRIDDEN REAL NEEDS. AND IF YOU THINK FOR A MINUTE THAT WE DON'T DO THAT TODAY, I WOULD STRONGLY SUGGEST WE DO TOO.

HERE IS A STORY....

Every church has what is called “the cold water committee.” Whenever the fire of God starts burning in the hearts of some folks, they rise up and pour cold water on it. Whenever there’s a new and creative way to do church, they pour cold water on that idea. The cold water committee is not an elected committee, the members are self-appointed. They think it is their job to make sure things don’t get out of hand in their church. Their favorite phrases are “we don’t do things like that around here” or “we’ve never done it that way before.” Like the ruler of the synagogue, these people may even quote a little scripture, but they are more into rules than into the freedom Jesus gives. May no one become a part of that committee and don’t pay any attention when someone on that committee corners you to complain about something going on in the church that they don’t like.

THIS LEADER OF THE SYNAGOGUE WAS CERTAINLY A MEMBER OF THE “COLD WATER COMMITTEE”
PEOPLE HAVE NEEDS WHEN THEY COME IN OUR DOORS AND IT IS OUR COMMAND, YES, AFTER ALL JESUS TOLD US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS HE LOVED US. IT WAS A COMMAND AND IF WE ARE DISCIPLES WE SHOULD FOLLOW ORDERS! **RULES ARE IMPORTANT BUT NOT WHEN THEY GET IN THE WAY OF MEETING PEOPLE'S NEEDS.**

THERE IS THE FAMOUS WORDS OF JESUS IN JOHN FOR BELIEVERS “ *So He said to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* **WE HAVE A FREEDOM IN OUR FAITH, ONE OF THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT IS JOY. “LEGALISM”** AS THE SYNAGOGUE LEADER HAD WAS HEAVY AND A JOY KILLER. **HOW MANY PEOPLE TODAY HAVE BEEN TURNED OFF AND LEFT THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF THIS “BURDEN” OF LEGALISM.**

WE ALL KNOW THE NURSERY RHYME OF HUMPTY DUMPTY. *Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall; All the King’s horses and all the King’s men; Couldn’t put Humpty Dumpty back together again.*

ALL OF US HAVE FALLEN AND CAN’T GET UP AND GET STRAIGHT. WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF BROKEN PEOPLE. LIFE IS FRAGILE; IT SHOULD BE HANDLED WITH CARE, BECAUSE PEOPLE BREAK EASILY. ALL THE SELF-HELP PROGRAMS, AND THE RELIGIOUS RULES CAN’T FIX THE BROKENNESS OF PEOPLE AROUND US. JESUS CHRIST WAS, AND IS THE ONLY PERSON WHO IS ABLE TO HEAL OUR BROKENNESS.

HERE IS A SECOND VERSES TO THAT FAMOUS NURSERY RHYME. *Jesus Christ came to your wall; And on the Cross, He died for your fall; Regardless of death and in spite of your sin; Through grace, He can put you together again.*

THE SYNAGOGUE LEADER WAS “MAJORING IN MINOR THINGS”. MAY WE THIS DAY REMEMBER THE WORDS OF HEBREWS 10:23-25 “ *Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another,..”*

THERE IS TRUE JOY FOUND WHEN WE ARE FREED FROM ANY AND ALL CONDITIONS THAT KEEP US “BENT OVER” AND FROM LOOKING UP AND PRAISING GOD WITH JOY. THEN AS IN THE LAST VERSE OF TODAY’S STORY WE CAN REJOICE AT ALL THE GLORIOUS THINGS GOD HAS AND IS DOING AMONG US!!!! AMEN.