

WHAT EXACTING ARE WE DOING?

TODAY'S READING IN JESUS' OWN WORDS GIVES A VERY VIVID PICTURE OF TWO MEN, ONE RICH AND ONE POOR. OUR FIRST REACTION MAY BE TO CONDEMN THE RICH MAN, BUT THAT IS NOT THE LESSON JESUS IS TEACHING HERE. JUST BEFORE HE TOLD THIS STORY IF WE GO BACK ABOUT FIVE VERSES YOU READ HOW THE PHARISEES, WHO WERE LOVERS OF MONEY WERE LISTENING TO JESUS' WORDS AND SCOFFING AT HIM. THE PHARISEES THOUGHT THEY WERE ENTITLED, THAT MONEY WAS DESERVED AND MONEY WAS A SIGN THEY WERE BLESSED BY GOD HIMSELF! IF YOU WERE POOR IT WAS A RESULT OF GOD'S CURSE. JESUS IN THIS STORY IS SAYING ALL OF US ARE STEWARDS OF WHAT WE HAVE AND WE ARE TO USE OUR RESOURCES TO BLESS OTHERS AND BRING HOPE, JOY AND HEALTH.

NOW NOTICE THIS STORY IS NOT SAYING THAT JESUS CONDEMNS ALL RICH AND THAT ALL POOR GO TO HEAVEN. AFTER ALL THERE IS NO EXPLANATION OF HOW THE RICH MAN GOT HIS MONEY OR THAT HE HAS IT. THE RICH MAN COULD HAVE BEEN A CARING PERSON TROUBLED BY PROBLEMS OF HIS DAY OR EVEN A GENEROUS GIVER TO CHARITABLE CAUSES, BUT WHATEVER HE WAS IN THIS STORY HE WAS BLIND TO THE PERSON IN NEED WHO WAS SITTING OUTSIDE HIS GATE. HE IS DAMNED FOR THE INDIFFERENCE TO THE PERSON RIGHT AT HIS DOOR!!! WHO IS OUR PERSON SITTING OUTSIDE OUR GATE RIGHT AT OUR DOOR?

THERE IS A STORY OF A PRODIGAL SON WHO CAME TO THE DOOR OF A PERSON. THE MAN FELT PUT UPON BY THIS PRODIGAL SON. THE MAN IN HIS HEAD COMPLAINED TO THE LORD " I CAN'T TAKE IN EVERY DRUNKEN BEGGAR IN THE CITY" A VERY CLEAR VOICE CAME BACK TO THE MAN "I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO TAKE IN EVERY DRUNK – JUST THIS ONE" THE MAN DID. HAVE YOU RECOGNIZED WHEN THE GOOD LORD HAS CALLED ON YOU? IT MAY BE ONE OF THE MOST INCONVENIENT TIMES, BUT WHEN GOD IS CALLING ON US TO USE TIME, TALENT OR TREASURE IT IS TO BLESS OTHERS AND WE TOO WILL FIND A BLESSING IN IT!!! I WILL READ THE WORDS OF JESUS FROM MATTHEW 20:28 *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."* **WE ARE HERE TO SERVE OTHERS!!! WE ARE HERE TO BE "DIFFERENT"!!!**

I CHALLENGED ALL OF US, ME INCLUDED, TO DO SOMETHING NEW THIS YEAR TO STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE AND DO SOMETHING MEANINGFUL IN ANOTHER PERSON'S LIFE. WHEN WE SAY WE HAVE NO TIME, I DON'T BUY THAT. IF WE MAKE SOMEONE A PRIORITY WE WILL ALWAYS HAVE TIME FOR THEM. HOW MUCH TIME DO WE SPEND ON "ME". ARE WE BEING JUST LIKE THE PHARISEES ,THINKING THAT SOMEHOW WE ARE "ENTITLED" TO "OUR TIME"? THAT IS FROM A CULTURE THAT IS SO WRAPPED UP IN ITSELF THAT MANY SUFFER RELATIONAL PROBLEMS, BECAUSE IT ALWAYS "ME" FIRST!!! DO WE AS DISCIPLES FIND ANYWHERE IN THE BIBLE THAT IS A ME FIRST? HOW MANY TIMES IS SERVANT, SERVING OR SERVICE IN THE BIBLE – OVER 1100 TIMES. **WHEN JESUS SPOKE OF THE NEW COMMANDMENT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS HE FIRST LOVED US HE KNEW LOVE REALLY WAS SAYING I AM HERE TO SERVE OR HELP IN ANY WAY I CAN.**

BEFORE I GO ANY FARTHER I WANT TO PUT SOMETHING OUT TO YOU. **THIS STORY, THIS PICTURE OF JESUS SHOWS US IS NOT ABOUT HEAVEN AND HELL.** DO YOU KNOW THAT IN THE JEWISH OLD TESTAMENT **THERE WAS NO WORD FOR HELL.** THE ONLY TWO WORDS THAT COME ANYWHERE CLOSE ARE SHEOL (SHEE O) , WHICH IS FOUND IN MANY OF THE PSALMS AND GEHEENA (GA HEN A). **BOTH WORDS REFER TO THE GRAVE OR PIT NOT HELL AS WE KNOW IT.** IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE KING JAMES VERSION THAT THE WORD "HELL" WAS TRANSLATED FROM THESE WORDS. NOW IT IS NOT TO SAY THERE IS NOT A "PLACE" WHERE ONE CAN BE SEPARATED FROM GOD, HIS PRESENCE AND LOVE. NO MATTER WHAT YOU WANT TO CALL IT THAT IS HELL!!!!

THE OVERRIDING POINT HERE IS WE HAVE THE MEANS TO HELP AND CHOOSE NOT TO THEN WE ARE JUDGED. THE POOR ARE ALSO TO BE GOOD STEWARDS OF WHAT LITTLE THEY HAVE TOO. **THE BOTTOM LINE IS WHAT WE HAVE IS NOT OURS.** GOD HAS ENABLED YOU TO ACCUMULATE ALL YOU HAVE. HE GAVE YOU THE ABILITY TO DO JUST THAT!!!

AN INTERESTING STORY HERE IS THAT ALBERT SCHWEITZER THE HUMANITARIAN, WAS CONVERTED BY THIS VERY STORY. HE BELIEVED AFRICA WAS THE POOR BEGGAR AT THE GATE OF EUROPE. HE LEFT EUROPE AFTER EARNING FIVE PHD'S AND WENT TO CARE FOR HIS POOR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

DAVID LIVINGSTON. MISSIONARY, TO AFRICA WALKED ALL OVER THE CONTINENT SHARING JESUS. MANY YEARS LATER AFTER HIS DEATH ANOTHER MISSIONARY CAME AND TALKED OF JESUS. AN OLDER WOMAN CAME UP TO THE MISSIONARY AND LOOKED HIM IN THE FACE AND SAID "OH, WAIT A MINUTE THAT MAN WAS HERE. HE VISITED OUR VILLAGE YEARS AGO" TO HER DAVID LIVINGSTON WAS JESUS!!!! **TO WHOM ARE YOU A JESUS FIGURE IN YOUR LIFE? WHAT ARE YOU "INVESTED" IN, MORE IMPORTANTLY IN WHO ARE YOU "INVESTED"?** WE DON'T HAVE TO GO TO SOME FAR OFF PLACE, AFTER ALL THE STORY IS ABOUT SEEING THE PERSON AT OUR GATE, WHEREVER THAT GATE IS TODAY AND WHO EVER THAT MAY BE.

LOOK AGAIN AT THE STORY. THE RICH MAN EVEN IN HIS RATHER "HOT" SITUATION IS STILL MAKING DEMANDS TO HAVE WATER TO QUENCH HIS THIRST. DESPITE HIS SITUATION HE HAS LEARNED NOTHING. **ARE WE ALL REBELLIOUS WHEN GOD CALLS ON US? WE ARE ALL GOD'S CHILDREN AND WHEN HE CALLS ON US HE NEEDS US! AFTER ALL WE ARE HIS HANDS, AND FEET.** AS PAUL EXHORTS US TO BE AMBASSADORS HEAR 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20 " *So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"* SERVICE, SERVING THEY ARE THE REASONS WE ARE HERE. I HAVE SAID THIS BEFORE TOO "YOU WILL NEVER SATISFY THAT INNER DESIRE OF YOUR SPIRIT UNTIL YOU SERVE OTHERS!!!!"

THERE IS AN INTERESTING PLEA BY THE RICH MAN TO HAVE SOMEONE GO BACK TO WARN HIS BROTHERS ABOUT THEIR FATE IF THEY CONTINUE ALONG THE SAME PATH. BUT ABRAHAM TELLS HIM THE BROTHERS HAVE MOSES AND THE PROPHETS AND TO HEAR THEIR WORDS. THE RICH MAN TALKS ABOUT SENDING SOMEONE FROM THE DEAD BACK IF THEY WILL REPENT. ABRAHAM TELLS HIM IF THEY DON'T LISTEN TO MOSES AND THE PROPHETS THEY WILL NOT BE PERSUADED BY THE DEAD.

NOW THINK THEY ONLY HAD MOSES AND THE PROPHETS, WE HAVE THE COMPLETE STORY!!! WHAT DELAYS US FROM LIVING A GODLY LIFE? WHAT DO WE LET GET IN THE WAY? IS IT THE APPEAL OF THE WORLDLY THINGS? JESUS TELLS US IN THIS STORY PRETTY CLEARLY WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING, BUT WILL WE GO OUT THOSE DOORS TODAY AND NOTHING WILL CHANGE AT ALL? WHEN IS IT GOING TO CHANGE? ASK GOD FOR GUIDANCE AND WHERE YOU SHOULD BE DOING HIS WORK. HE WILL SEND YOU SOMEONE I GUARANTEE IT.

THIS STORY IS REALLY ABOUT STEWARDSHIP. THE RICH MAN DID NOT USE WHAT HE HAD AND REALLY DID NOTHING TO HELP THOSE RIGHT OUTSIDE HIS GATE!!! THE STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN IS COMING SOON WITH A THEM OF SEEDS. THINK TODAY IN LIGHT OF THIS STORY WHAT KIND OF “SEEDS” ARE YOU OR I PLANTING? HAVE WE “PLANTED” WISELY OR JUST LEFT THE “SEEDS” IN THE PACKET? OR WORST YET LET SOMEONE ELSE PLANT FOR US?

THINK ON THESE THOUGHTS....

We plant when we speak. We plant with our possessions.

We plant with our thoughts. We plant with our actions.

We plant with our greetings. We plant with our giving.

We plant with our testimony. In all we do we plant.

Our planting here on earth is for reaping not onions or potatoes, but heavenly treasures.

IT IS ALL ABOUT STEWARDSHIP AND THAT IS NOT ALL ABOUT MONEY. GOD WANTS YOUR BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT AS WELL AS YOUR HEART. THE QUESTION IS “WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE DOING IN THIS LIFE? IT IS NEVER TOO SOON TO BEGIN LOOKING FOR THAT PERSON OUTSIDE OUR GATE.

I PRAY FOR ALL OF US TO DISCOVER THAT PERSON IN OUR LIVES AND THAT WE ARE GOOD STEWARDS OF WHAT GOD HAS BLESSED US WITH. AMEN.