

WHICH ONE?

LAST WEEK'S READING FROM LUKE TOLD US THAT FORGIVENESS IS A FOUNDATIONAL STONE OF A DISCIPLE'S LIFE. FORGIVENESS IS KEY TO DAILY SURVIVAL. SOUND DRAMATIC? NOT REALLY, BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T FORGIVE, IT AFFECTS YOU EMOTIONALLY, PHYSICALLY, BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY IT IS A STUMBLING BLOCK IN OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE. GOD IS CONCERNED FOR EACH OF US IN ALL THESE AREAS. YET, WE ARE UNFORGIVING AND THEN SENSE THINGS ARE NOT JUST QUITE RIGHT IN OUR LIVES AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS.

WHEN WE FORGIVE WE ARE ONLY DOING OUR "DUTY" OF A LOYAL SERVANT AND DISCIPLE! REMEMBER GOD IS ONLY CONCERNED ABOUT YOU AND WHAT YOU DO, THAT OTHER PERSON, HE WILL TAKE CARE OF THEM. I BELIEVE MANY TIMES WE POINT TO OTHERS AND THEIR FAULTS IN ORDER TO TAKE THE LIGHT OFF OURS. **IT AMAZES ME HOW WISE AND TRUE THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE ARE, TODAY, AND APPLY TO US!!!! WE ALL KNOW THE WORDS OF JESUS IN MATTHEW 7 WHEN HE TALKS OF THE SPECK IN A FRIEND'S EYE AND THE LOG OR BEAM IN OUR EYE. **LET'S ADMIT IT, IT IS EASIER TO POINT OUT SOMEONE ELSE'S FAULT THAN TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN!!!****

WE MAY SUM IT UP THAT EACH AND EVERY DAY WE **MUST** FORGIVE ANY ONE WHO CROSSES OUR PATH FOR IT IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR OVERALL HEALTH AND GOD KNOWS WHAT IS BEST FOR US. **GOD LOVES US RIGHT WHERE WE ARE, BUT HE DOES NOT DESIRE FOR US TO REMAIN THERE, BUT MOVE ON.** AFTER ALL FAITH IS ACTION!!!! PART OF A POEM SAYS "LOVE SO AMAZING SO DIVINE, DEMANDS MY SOUL, MY LIFE, MY ALL.

THERE IS A SECOND LEVEL ON WHICH TO LIVE OUR LIVES DAILY. THAT IS WHAT TODAY'S READING IS ABOUT, LIVING A LIFE OF GRATITUDE. SOME OF US COULD BE THINKING RIGHT NOW "WHAT HAVE I TO BE THANKFUL FOR?" IT HAS BEEN A DIFFICULT DAY, WEEK OR YEAR. DO WE BELIEVE IN THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE, THE PROMISES? I THESSALONIANS 5:18 "*Give thanks in every circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*" **VERY FEW WORDS, BUT THEY LEAVE NO DOUBT THAT "IN" EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE GIVE THANKS.** IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES DO WE TURN TO GOD OR TURN AWAY FROM HIM? WHEN WE LIVE ON THIS "SECOND LEVEL", THAT OF AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE IT BECOMES A NATURAL THING WE DO.

I HAVE A FRIEND AND MORE THAN ONCE HE WOULD CALL US WHEN WE WERE TRAVELING BETWEEN MAYO AND HOME. I COULD COUNT ON HIM ASKING ME BEFORE OUR CONVERSATION WAS OVER THAT HE WANTED TO PRAY FOR US. IT IS SECOND NATURE FOR HIM. WHEN WE ARE LIVING DAY TO DAY AND TAKE THE TIME TO REALIZE GOD LOVES US, FORGIVES US AND IS SO GENEROUS WITH HIS GRACE HOW CAN WE NOT LIVE IN GRATITUDE?

IN OUR STORY TODAY THERE ARE SOME INTERESTING POINTS. OF THE TEN LEPERS WE KNOW ONE WAS A SAMARITAN. NOW REMEMBER THAT THE JEWS HAD NO DEALING WITH THE SAMARITANS AS THEIR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES WERE AN IMPURE MIX. ALSO THEY WERE NOT PURE JEWS NOR PURE GENTILES. WHEN ASSYRIANS CONQUERED THE JEWS AND THE JEWS WERE CARRIED OFF IN CAPTIVITY OTHERS REMAINED AND MARRIED THE GENTILES THE ASSYRIANS BROUGHT IN TO SETTLE THE LAND. THEY MIXED PAGAN AND JEWISH PRACTICES. BUT IN OUR STORY THE DISEASE THAT AFFLICTED ALL TEN LEPERS ERASED ANY BARRIERS BETWEEN THEM. THE ONLY THING THAT REMAINED WAS THEIR NEED. THIS IS A GREAT LESSON SHOWN HERE, AND APPLIES TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US. IN WAYS WE ARE JUST LIKE THE LEPERS, WE ALL SIN SO WE ARE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT WHETHER WE ARE WHITE, BLACK, OR POLKA DOT! WE ARE AFFLICTED BY THE DISEASE OF SIN, BUT JUST LIKE JESUS WHO WENT TO THE LEPERS, GOD COMES TO US WITH LOVE, GRACE AND FORGIVENESS TO HEAL US AND TELL US TO GO AND SHOW OUR HEALING TO OTHERS. TO TELL THEM OF GOD'S GREAT HEALING POWER.

THE LEPERS WERE TOLD BY JESUS TO GO AND SHOW THEMSELVES TO THE PRIESTS. THEY INDEED WERE HEALED, BUT IF HEALING IS THE ONLY THING IT DOES NOT MAKE US A COMPLETE PERSON. WHEN THE ONE LEPER, A SAMARITAN, CAME BACK JESUS TOLD HIM "YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL". **GOD IS NOT ONLY CONCERNED WITH THE OUR PHYSICAL BODY BUT OUR WHOLE BEING.**

IF WE LOOK BACK AT THE STORY OF NAAMAN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT HE WAS CLEANSED OF LEPROSY, BECAUSE OF HIS OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD THROUGH THE PROPHET. THEN WHEN HE CAME BACK TO ELISHA HE SAID "BEHOLD NOW, I KNOW THAT THERE IS NO GOD IN ALL THE EARTH, BUT IN ISRAEL" NAAMAN, LIKE THE SAMARITAN IN TODAY'S READING, WAS NOT ONLY CLEANSED BUT MADE WELL OR MADE WHOLE. IN BOTH CASES THERE WAS **NOT JUST A PHYSICAL HEALING, BUT A SPIRITUAL HEALING.**

I WILL SAY IT AGAIN - GOD IS INTERESTED IN THE WHOLE PERSON!!! **HOW COULD A GOD WHO SENT HIS ONLY SON, BECAUSE HE SO LOVED US, CARE ANY LESS?** THE SAMARITAN WHEN HE CAME BACK "WITH A LOUD VOICE GLORIFIED GOD" THERE IS THAT ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE THAT WE SHOULD ALL BE LIVING.

HERE IS A STORY OF SUCH AN ATTITUDE. There was an immigrant shopkeeper whose son came to him one day complaining "dad, I don't understand how you run this store. You keep your accounts payable in a cigar box. Your accounts receivable are on a spindle. All your cash is in the register. You never know what your profits are" his father answered "when I arrived in this land all I owned was the pants I was wearing. Now your sister is an art teacher. Your brother is a doctor. You are a CPA. Your mother and I own a house, a car and this store. Add that all up and subtract the pants and there is your profit".

A "WELL" PERSON HAS A SENSE OF GRATITUDE FOR ANY AND ALL BLESSINGS. IS THAT THE WAY WE LIVE? CAN WE LOOK BACK AND "LOUDLY" PRAISE GOD AND BE THANKFUL. SAYING IT ANOTHER WAY ARE WE FULL OF THANKS?

A DEVOTION I READ TO AD COUNCIL ON WEDNESDAY WAS ABOUT THIS VERY TOPIC OF BEING **THANKFUL. IT IS OUR CHOICE AFTER ALL TO WALK TOWARD A LIFE OF GRATITUDE AND THANKSGIVING OR WE CAN JUST AS EASILY WALK TOWARD NEGATIVITY AND FIND FAULT WITH EVERY LITTLE THING IN OUR LIFE AND IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.** I WILL SAY THIS AGAIN BECAUSE WE SEEM TO FORGET IT. PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE TO BE AROUND PEOPLE THAT COMPLAIN OR NITPICK ALL THE TIME. IT GETS OLD REALLY FAST.

THERE ARE AREAS OF OUR LIFE WE MUST BE ON THE LOOKOUT SO THAT GRATITUDE DOES NOT SLIP INTO BEING UNGRATEFUL. ONE IS FINDING AGED PARENTS A NUISANCE. THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT, THE ONLY ONE WITH A PROMISE, "COMMANDS" US TO HONOR OUR PARENTS THAT OUR DAYS MAY BE LONG ON THIS EARTH. I AM AMAZED AT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE ELDERLY PARENTS STILL ALIVE. WHAT A TREASURE!!!! I HAVE WATCHED AN ELDERLY PARENT JUST "WORSHIPED" BY THEIR CHILD AND HOW THEY APPRECIATED EVERY MINUTE WITH THAT PARENT. IT IS A WITNESS TO THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT. HERE IS A LINE FROM KING LEAR - "HOW SHARPER THAN A SERPENT'S TOOTH IT IS TO HAVE A THANKLESS CHILD". DON'T BE ONE OF THOSE!!! NO MATTER HOW YOUNG OR OLD YOU ARE.

WE CAN EASILY BECOME UNGRATEFUL TO PEOPLE AROUND US, LIKE CO-WORKERS, NEIGHBORS OR OTHERS. WE CAN ALL LIKELY THINK OF SOMEONE THAT WE ARE THANKFUL FOR CROSSING OUR PATH. THERE IS A LINE FROM A POEM “BLOW, BLOW WINTER WIND, THOU ART NOT SO UNKIND AS A MAN'S INGRATITUDE”. JESUS' MINISTRY WAS ONE OF COMPASSION AND SERVICE. AS FOLLOWERS ARE WE TO DO ANY LESS?

THE LAST AREA CAN BE THAT OF BEING UNGRATEFUL TO GOD. HOW MANY OF US PRAY A BLESSING BEFORE A MEAL? GOD GAVE US HIS SON, THAT SHOULD BE REASON ENOUGH TO GIVE HIM THANKS **DAILY!** PSALM 103 SAYS “Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all His benefits” HE DESERVES OUR THANKS!

WE ARE WELL REMINDED TO NOT FORGET THE WORDS OF PHILIPPIANS 4:5-7 “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition **with thanksgiving** present your requests to God*” THESE ARE THE WORDS OF A MAN IN PRISON. HE HAD A GOOD REASON NOT TO PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING, BUT BY FAITH HE DID.

IN CLOSING THAT SAMARITAN LEPER CAME BACK AND PRAISED GOD. EVEN THOUGH IT DOES NOT SAY IT CAN BE PRETTY CERTAIN HE STILL HAD DAILY PROBLEMS AHEAD. HIS FAITH LET HIM SEE GOD WAS BIGGER THAN ANY PROBLEM HE HAD. HE PRAISED GOD AND GAVE THANKS, SOMETHING THAT COMES FROM HEART AND AS A DISCIPLE WE ALL SHOULD BE PRACTICING.

I PRAY TODAY THAT ALL OF US ARE LIKE THAT ONE LEPER WHO CAME BACK TO SHOW GRATITUDE AND PRAISE GOD FOR ALL HE HAS AND IS DOING IN OUR LIVES!

THESE THREE “LEVELS” WE HAVE SEEN IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS ARE THE PATH TO TAKE.

**FORGIVENESS FOR DAILY SURVIVAL,
GRATITUDE FOR WHOLENESS BEYOND HEALTH, AND
PRAISE WHERE GOD CAN COME TO US IN THE MOST MEANINGFUL WAYS.
AMEN.**